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BY

HOBART CHATFIELD TAYLOR

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WITH EDGE TOOLS.

CHAPTER I.

THE STATEN CLUB.

In the world of clubs the "Staten" held its head proudly. It was a social union comprising the most exclusive men of family and fashion. Though its outward walls differed little from those of other clubs which lined the avenue, its muster-roll was sacredly guarded by the governors, and posted at the hall desk was a long list of waiting aspirants, each to undergo in his turn the scrutiny of the committee-room, where all antecedents must be known and approved before his card could bear "Staten Club" in the left-hand, lower corner. Other club buildings there were, in New York, of greater stateliness, with marble walls and galleries, and well filled libraries, but the "Staten" cared for none of these, and proudly pointed to its members' list, where were inscribed five hundred names which no other club could ever

hope to equal. Three rooms, the restaurant, café, and billiard room, received their share of patronage, while the lounging room, upon the avenue, where a few papers were kept for respectability's sake, and others for use, was the daily haunt of some of the choicest spirits. In the early days of the club's history, to be sure, a thoughtless governor had inspired the foundation of a library. A room upstairs somewhere (few of the members knew where) was selected, and into this were placed a set of Dickens, the "Britannica," an atlas, a history or two, a dictionary, and perhaps a hundred other books, which together formed the nucleus of a store of knowledge. But no one went there except Simkins, Rynder and McLaughlin. They were a queer lot; none of the men could make them out; it was their families that got them elected, and they never seemed to have anything better to do than cuddle over musty books. But the choice clique were those whose names were most often signed to the wine-room tickets. It was they who ran the club and made it the popular place it was.

On a particular January afternoon, of a year not long since passed, one of the broad, front

windows of the lounging room was occupied by three intimates of "the set." There was Rennsler Van Vort, whose ancestor had been a red-faced burgher at the time when old Peter Stuyvesant rigorously ruled New Amsterdam. His fortune was his name, for the family was too old to be wealthy and too proud to be in trade; yet he never lacked a berth on a yacht or a room in a country house, and wherever he went, he brought a collection of rare tales and a song or two which made him the friend of all. Like his burgher ancestor he had a red, round face and was bald, but behind his glasses there were two queer, little eyes which shone with kindly humor, and from lips half hidden by stubby black hairs, bright, timely words were sure to come. Rennsler was the senior by several years of his companions, and, if the truth were known, he probably cared little for them, but Roland Waterman owned the "Phrygia," and Clifford Howard-Jones was a coaching man with a shooting box and other convenient accessories.

It had been snowing in the morning, but the sun had turned the snow to slush, and the three men, for lack of more exciting sport, were

watching the omnibus horses slide and struggle down Murray Hill, and the pedestrians splash and spatter in their vain efforts to dodge the cabs and reach the curbs with unsoiled feet. If the unfortunate wayfarer happened to be a woman, and a pretty one at that, the three friends would smirk and nudge each other, as the little feet tripped daintily from puddle to puddle, or splashed her white skirts with great mud blotches, while the owner folded them about her and pattered rapidly on her heels, foolishly fancying the more speed the less mud. An occasional witticism from Rennsler's lips would heighten the grotesqueness of a luckless passer's struggles. The other two would laugh and Howard-Jones would add some strained gibe, with the flat effect that forced wit always has. Perhaps half an hour was thus passed, when Howard-Jones spied a woman leaving a house in a side street. A carriage was waiting at the curb, and a footman was vainly endeavoring to protect her feathers from the rain; but forgetting the servant and his umbrella, she gathered her skirts up frantically and rushed from the bottom step to the carriage door, which, of course being closed, left

her no alternative but to stand patiently in the drenching rain until the marked precision of the footman's steps brought relief and the umbrella.

"Look at that action!" shouted Howard-Jones. "Great for park work but too high for the open. Easy, my beauty, or you will come a cropper at the curb. By Jove, fellows, it is Mrs. Harry Osgood."

"So it is," replied Waterman. "I wonder what she is mousing about that street after? She must be searching for her Duncan. Dear girl, how pathetically lonesome she looked at Sherry's last night when Grahame left her to dance with Mrs. Rossy Platt."

This remark was hailed by Howard-Jones with the world-wise chuckle with which a man of narrow sympathy and ill-spent life invariably receives a pointed insinuation against a woman's character. Broad sentiments and heroic impulses are seldom nursed in clubs, and Howard-Jones had learned his ethics within the limits of the world in which he moved.

"If I were Osgood, I would go gunning for Grahame," he retorted. "A rounder like

Duncan never hovers about a bird so long for nothing."

"He had far better give up dogs and horses and bestow a little attention on his wife,' Rennsler Van Vort replied. He had the persuasive sympathy, possessed by few men, which told him that a woman's heart, though easily won by flattery may be as easily lost by neglect. The lack of fortune had brought him into contact with the petty meanness of life and if he had made friends whose hospitality helped out his meagre purse, he knew that without his postprandial accomplishments and unquestioned ancestry few boards would have a place for him. He did not imagine that a moral truism would deeply affect his companions, but his broad instincts prompted him to add that "when a married woman goes astray it is usually the fault of her mother or her husband "

"Nonsense, old chap," retorted Howard-Jones. "Mrs. Osgood is a pretty woman, and a pretty woman must have admiration. Duncan used to admire her, but Osgood had the money and she married him. Duncan Grahame keeps right on admiring her and Osgood doesn't, so there you are."

The argument thus incited might have been continued were it not for the interruption caused by the familiar voice of a man, who had just entered, hailing the group at the window with the somewhat pithy expression: "What are you sportsmen doing there? Staring at nothing, I'll wager, and I don't believe you have had one drink between you for a week."

The men at the window turned, and were startled to see standing in the door the man of whom they were speaking, Duncan Grahame. His clothes showed that he had just come from the city. His trousers were turned up and muddy, and his hat was sprinkled with rain. The merry familiarity of his expression told, however, that he had not heard the remark just made, but Howard-Jones, a trifle abashed at finding one of the objects of his insinuations appear so inopportunely, and feeling that something had better be said to remove the embarrassment, took it upon himself to reply. "I don't believe we have, but you are just in time to stir us up. Rennsler has been preaching and we are awfully dry; just punch that bell, won't you."

The appearance of the servant caused the four friends to draw as many chairs about a small cherry wood table, supplied with the usual complement of bell, match-box and ash-tray, and as the servant put the familiar question—"What is the order, sir?" it was followed by the habitual meditative silence. Grahame threw himself back in his chair and pushed his hat back, doubtfully. "I have got a Sahara thirst," he finally said, "so I suppose it will have to be a long drink. Bring me a whiskey and soda."

"Split the soda with me, won't you?" interjected Howard-Jones.

"Couldn't think of it, my love," Grahame replied; "I have not had a drink to-day. Went to lunch with the senior partner and he ordered nothing more stimulating than unfiltered Croton. He took me out to talk business, and I nearly expired under the strain." Howard-Jones finally decided to indulge in a whole bottle of Delatour, but when Rennsler Van Vort quietly told the servant he would take an Apollinaris lemonade without sugar, it was too much for the dashing Duncan. "When do you take orders, old man?" he said. "All you need

is a cowl and sandals, for nature has kindly tonsured your locks for you. I suppose you will soon be leading the singing at noon prayer meetings."

"I am off my liquor," Van Vort replied; "but if I do come to noon meetings I feel sure I'll do better with Sankey hymns than I do now with comic ditties."

"Don't start Rennsler preaching," Howard-Jones interjected, "he's primed with moral bosh and the atmosphere is too depressed already. What brings a hard-working man like you uptown at four o'clock? I thought you didn't knock off until five."

"I don't," Duncan replied, "but I am going out to Chicago to-morrow and I am taking a half holiday to prepare my nerves for the strain."

"Going to Chicago," the three interposed almost in a breath.

"Yes, and, worse luck, I don't know when I shall get back. I am going out for an English syndicate we have in tow. The Britons have bought all the breweries and stock-yards out there, and now they are after elevators."

"'Elevators', exclaimed Waterman, "I should

think they do need a few in London; those beastly 'lifts' they have in the hotels there are about the only British institution I don't admire. But what have you got to do with elevators?"

"Don't be an ass, Roland," Duncan replied. "It is about time you knew that the chief industry of 'the city of the future', as some fool journalist calls Chicago,—pork of course excepted,—is grain, and elevators are the warehouses where it is stored. I am going out to work a scheme to buy them all up, make a trust, and sell the stock in London. Our house are the middlemen between Chicago and the Britons. Now do you see?"

"Well, I'm deuced glad I didn't go into Wall Street," Roland replied. "I shouldn't care to be shut up in that beastly hole, Chicago. I don't believe there is a sportsman in the place. I stopped there a day once on my way to Minnesota, grouse shooting, and I never saw such a rum place. I put up at the biggest hotel in the town, and there wasn't much to complain of in the size of it; but the dirt and the niggers were too much for me. I had to eat dinner at two o'clock and I wish you could

have seen how they managed it. I was met at the door by a six-foot black man in a waistcoat that was perhaps white in the year one, and a coat made in the days of Henry Clay. He waltzed us down the room with the airs of a drum major and put us at a table with a drummer and a cow-boy. There we were given in charge of another colored gentleman who polished off the plates with a greasy towel, and placed big tumblers of iced water at each place. He took our orders and brought us the soup in fairly good shape, except that his black fingers got into all the plates; but you ought to have seen the rest of the dinner. He started from the kitchen at a record-breaking pace, spinning a tray on the forefinger of his right hand. He galloped past us and deposited his implements on a side table, then he commenced to sling canary birds' bath tubs, filled with heaven knows what, across the table like poker chips, until we had a perfect collection of samples of the most villainously cooked truck I ever tasted. I tried to make out a 'feed', but I gave it up when the black gentleman appeared with all sorts of pie, floating island, ice cream and jelly. I then fled in despair and went out for a walk,

but I didn't find anything but mud, smoke, and cable cars. I tell you, Duncan, old man, you don't know what Chicago is, or you wouldn't look so beautifully unconcerned."

A burst of laughter greeted Waterman's recital of his pathetic experience, and then Duncan, who little relished his coming exile, mournfully asked if any of the fellows knew some people of the right sort in the place.

"No one but a charming creature of the vintage of forty-nine whom I saw at the Pier last summer," retorted Howard-Jones. "She must ride sixteen stone, but she canters about like a yearling and plasters her hair all over her face in little curlycues, to say nothing of her voice, which used to run an effective opposition to the steam horn at the lighthouse. But speaking of lighthouses, you should have seen her diamond earrings; the light on Point Judith wasn't a circumstance to them. When the heat was too much for her, she used to mop her face with a piece of chamois and puff like a crippled hunter. The papers called her 'the beautiful and accomplished leader of Chicago society.' I tell you, old man, she is the girl for you; she'll enliven your weary hours."

Another laugh greeted this effusion, but Van Vort felt compelled to interpose an objection. "I don't believe any of you fellows know the first thing about the West," he said. "Your ideas are bounded by Bar Harbor on the north and Washington on the south, and as for their western limits, they don't extend beyond Orange County."

"Come, old chap, you're getting into deep water. Didn't I tell you I had been in Chicago?" objected Waterman.

"You went out West after chickens, and you didn't get beyond a Minnesota shooting club. As for Chicago, you admit that you were there on a muggy day and didn't stir two squares from an hotel which, I wager, wasn't the best in the place. As for the people, one of the best mannered women I ever met came from Chicago."

"Who was she?" Duncan interrupted. "If there is anybody decent in the place I want to know her."

"Her name is Mrs. Sanderson. I met her in Washington last winter. Her uncle was in the State Department and she was visiting him. She had a friend with her who is also from

Chicago, I think, and they both of them were better read and had less affectation than any women I have met for a year, at least."

"That sounds encouraging," replied Duncan. "I think I have heard Sibyl Wright talk about that Mrs. Sanderson. If there is any sport in Chicago I am bound to have it. My old college chum, Harold Wainwright, has been living out there for three years and he must know the town by this time."

"I say, Duncan, won't you have some more liquor? You need it to fortify your nerves for that voyage of discovery."

"I think you are right, Roland," Duncan replied. "By Jove, though, I don't believe I have time; I have got a date before dinner."

"Oh, yes you have; just one more for luck. Here, waiter, take the orders."

The glasses were soon removed and freshly filled ones took their place. "When are you off?" said Waterman.

"To-morrow on the 'Limited'" was the reply.

"Then let's drink to the great Duncan and his success among the pork-packers," said Howard-Jones.

The four men quickly drained their glasses

and Duncan took a hurried leave of his friends. "Good-by, Duncan, good-by," were the exchanged partings. Duncan hurried through the hall, hailed a cab at the door, gave an up-town address to the driver, jumped into the cab, and was off.

CHAPTER II.

CROSS FIRE.

Duncan was dressing. It was already five minutes past the hour named for dinner on his invitation, but if Duncan were not late at dinner, it would deprive the guests of one stock topic of conversation, and he had never yet been so inconsiderate. No one waited for him, and when he finally appeared with some trumped up excuse, it was greeted with a round of laughter, and served to enliven the naturally trifling *entrée* conversation; so no one,—least of all the hostess,—blamed him. One who has been in an engine house when an alarm of fire is turned in can form some idea of Duncan's dressing accomplishments. There were, to be sure, no clanging gongs, stamping horses, and scurrying, half-dressed men, but there was the same instantaneous assumption of perfect order out of bewildering chaos. His servant was his faithful assistant, and when Duncan's steps

were heard upon the stairs, he would seize a shirt in one hand and a pair of trousers in the other, which he held waiting for the arrival of his master. Duncan would make a wild rush through the door, and his top coat, coat and waistcoat would fly across the room at random, while Parker pulled off one pair of trousers and assisted him on with another. A dive into a face bath would give Parker time to change the odds and ends in Duncan's pockets; while on would go the shirt, and the tie would be adjusted and his hair smoothed while the servant replaced the muddy boots with evening shoes. Coat and waistcoat would go on together, hat, umbrella and overcoat be seized, and off Duncan would start in the official time of three minutes and seventeen seconds.

On the present occasion he desisted from his dressing long enough to read a small, blue note which he found upon his dressing table. It was worded as follows: "The coast is clear at nine, and will be so till after midnight. I will see you if you come." There was no signature or address. It had been left by a maid in the usual way, so Parker said, but even unsigned and non-committal as it was, it did not please

Duncan. "I wish I could forget that woman," he muttered to himself. "But I suppose I will be there and play the fool, just as I always do. I have a mind to break away from her, though." Then, turning to Parker, he continued audibly, "I am going to Chicago to-morrow morning. Have my portmanteau and shirt box packed. You know about what I want, but put in plenty of shirts as I may be gone some weeks."

"Very good, sir," replied the taciturn Parker. "Hi suppose you will want your hulster for the journey, sir."

"Yes," replied Duncan; then putting on his coat and hat, and seizing a pair of gloves and a stick, he rushed down the stairs without stopping for that apartment elevator which was never running, jumped into the cab he had left waiting, and was off uptown to his dinner. He was only half an hour late but his rudeness was punished, for he was placed between a débutante and a dowager, and condemned for two mortal hours to endure alternately insipid zephyrs and chilling blasts of small talk. Stiff-backed chairs were there and stiff-backed people were in them. Shaded candles threw a flickering light upon a mass

of plate and flowers, bonbons, almonds, fruit and glasses. Around the table was a circle of bare necks and diamonds, white shirts and ties; and behind the chairs solemn footmen silently moved from place to place passing the endless courses. Some of the guests were bright and others solemn; some brilliant and others stupid; but they were the component parts of a fashionable dinner. There was a banker, a broker, a yachtsman, a diplomat, a merchant, and a sprinkling of dawdling men of leisure, and their wives, daughters, and cousins. The forks rattled and the tongues clattered, while each strove to hide his inner nature behind an effective pose. The clever succeeded and the stupid failed. Coffee was brought; the women arose, a man or two sprawled beneath the table to find some fan or glove, and then the women filed slowly out to gossip and dissect their neighbors, and the men remained to drink and smoke and drink again, while a ribald wag related some choice but scandalous tale, and ardent sportsmen took sides in vain disputes about the "Poseidon's" time allowance and "Salvador's" Suburban chances.

Duncan was moodily indisposed for banter or dispute. His buoyant and careless spirit seldom deserted him, but this dinner only claimed his presence because his senior partner was the host, and none of his *intimes* being there, he fell readily into a state of passive ill-humor. He dosed over his glass of port, carelessly puffed his cigar and occasionally proffered an opinion with a superior air incited by his social ascendency over most of the men present. Duncan Grahame was a man whose dominant characteristic was assurance, tempered only by an intuitive knowledge of the social amenities. He was often bold but never vulgar. He was rude in the manner of most society men, but his rudeness was a pose prompted by the mannerisms of the age, and designed, as was his coat, after the latest London model. He possessed the rare fortune of being considered handsome both by men and women. His beauty was of the vigorous type, which wins admiration by its manliness rather than its perfection. His eyes were great, grey wells, which gave to women a Narcissus-like reflection of their own impulses. They charmed by their seeming

sympathy, but were really the artful tools of conscious power. To most men's minds curly hair is a blemish which barbers' shears and bristly brushes may remove, but to women Duncan Grahame's short, crispy black curls were a seldom failing charm. Although his eyes might deceive even one who knew the countless evidences of breeding and career, his mouth, partly hidden by a short moustache, betrayed the hard, unmistakable markings of indulgence, and a student of life would have mentally described him by the trite, though significant expression, "a man of the world." And such was Duncan Grahame,—no better and no worse than scores whose names adorn the blue books of metropolitan life. There was once a time, not many years before, when he had been an innocent and confiding boy. He had gone to school and then to college,—a dangerous experiment at best, but, with a boy like Duncan, who had been brought up within the strictness of a Connecticut home and turned upon the world without a knowledge of it, pretty sure to result as it had turned out in his case. It was the old story of weakness, ignorance, and a desire to em-

ulate his upper classmen and be a man. The first step was not taken without a struggle, but one by one the cards of which the Puritan moral structure was built were blown away, and, left without support, the edifice collapsed. What other result could be expected? His Christian ethics were but the expurgated teachings of the pulpit, tempered by dogmas and doctrines, and in his home the faintest whisperings of the real world brought blushes to his parents, and stilted, meaningless words of warning. His first intimations of worldly ways were gathered surreptitiously in the streets, and his first knowledge of the nature of sin came with the temptation. The struggle was brief; perhaps it was as strong as could be expected; and soon he was the careless, fearless leader of the mischievous, rollicking set to be found in every college. He became, he thought, a man, and knew the world. He left college and after two years in London and Paris came to New York. His family was excellent, his appearance attractive, his manners good, and his assurance unbounded,—all that was needed, except money, to win social success in the metropolis.

Money he did not have, but he resolved to make it, so into Wall Street he went, and was so successful there, that at the end of three years he became the junior partner of a great brokerage house and was entrusted with the furtherance of many delicate schemes. In society he had won his way to a leadership in not the best, but the best advertised, set in New York. The plunge into the cold torrent of Wall Street deception was sufficient to chill even a stronger optimistic ardor than Duncan's, but when he was carried on into the whirling, flashing eddies of smart society, only to be left shivering upon the cruel reefs of selfishness and debauchery, every chivalrous sentiment was gone, and when he gathered courage for the second plunge, it was as a designing, selfish disciple of utility.

To return to the dinner. The men had left their coffee and cigars and the lucky ones had singled out attractive adversaries, with whom to thrust and parry bright, sharp phrases in those exhilarating practice-bouts of love, sure to precede the desperate encounters where mask and buttoned foil are

cast aside. Others, to whom fortune was less kind, were striving to cull from unsympathetic neighbors some evidences of interest and intelligence, or had resigned themselves to the melancholy fate of being bored. Duncan wandered restlessly about awhile. He found no one to interest him, and being too selfish deliberately to resign himself to another dowager, he remembered that his intended journey to the West offered a plausible reason for retiring, so, making his excuses to the hostess, he took his departure, feeling, as he folded his muffler about his neck and buttoned his great-coat, that for a successful dinner more depends on the choice of guests than the choice of wines.

The little blue note found upon his dressing table turned his steps still farther uptown. The thaw of the afternoon was over; it was snowing, and cold blasts blew the flakes against his face, biting his cheeks and chilling his humor, so that when he had trudged the three squares he had to go, he felt the ill-temper which a raw wind invariably produces in one whose moods change with the barometer. He approached the particular

flight of brown stone steps he sought, and observing that the street both ways was free from passers, and that the curtains of the adjoining houses were drawn, he ascended and rang the bell; a servant soon opened the door and he entered quickly. The door closed, and, instead of darkness and snowflake blasts, there was warmth and light, and a pretty woman standing just inside the drawing-room door, murmuring playfully in a soft tone: "Duncan, you cold, naughty fellow, I was willing to lay a dozen bottles of Houbigant that this wind would have blown away what little was left of your flighty heart."

"Don't chaff me. I'm in no mood for it. I wish you had sat out a stupid dinner and afterward had tramped three blocks in the snow."

"I actually believe that the usually serene nature of Mr. Duncan Grahame is a trifle, that is to say only a trifle, ruffled," she ironically replied. "I fancied that while Henry Stokes Osgood, Esquire, whom the laws designate my lord and master, was attending the Yacht Club election, Mr. Grahame might deign to amuse me. If I was not mistaken,

his lordship, when he has removed his outer garments, can find me in the back drawing-room."

Duncan was left standing in the hallway. He had silently permitted her to retire because he had been unable to find a ready reply to her words. He had made up his mind to be disagreeable, and it angered him to have his guns silenced after the first fire.

He was in the habit of bullying women, but such tactics had invariably proved useless against Helen Osgood. When he was away from her he felt ashamed to think that her's was the stronger nature. He fancied, at times, that he did not care for her, and was resolved for policy's sake to break away from her influence, but each attempt of his to anger her, instead of producing tears and pleadings, ended, as he feared this would, in a meek surrender on his part. "That woman understands me," he muttered as he removed his great-coat. He was never sure of his ability to read her subtle blue-black eyes; even her soft, olive cheeks never changed their delicate shading, and her thin, languid lips were often determined and cold. Her

hair was of a lustreless black, and her figure was delicately, but superbly, formed. She was the blended type of Celt and Creole, her father being Scotch and her mother of Louisiana French descent. In her the cold cunning of the North bridled the reckless warmth of the South. Her acts were prompted by impulse but masked by design, and if Duncan seemed at times to reach her Southern heart, the canny Scotch nature quickly veiled her feelings, and he was left at a loss to know whether he had inspired passion or merely aroused amusement.

But it was not his nature to analyze deeply or reflect long. He removed his coat, walked slowly down the long hallway, and entered the back drawing-room door. Mrs. Osgood was gracefully ensconced in the corner of a divan from the Orient, and her eyes were fixed apparently upon the latest work of Paul Bourget. A tall, bronze lamp was at her side and its rays were tempered by a carefully selected shade of the most becoming tinge. The other lights were dimmed, and beyond could be seen the subdued forms of graceful plants, while beneath her feet the yielding fur

of an Arctic bear half hid two tiny bronze-tipped slippers and just enough of scarlet silk.

Duncan stood silently before her. Uncurbed natures are the most capricious, and as he gazed his anger turned to admiration, and he softly sat down beside her, took her hand, and said winningly, "Nell, dear, let's be friends."

She pushed him away, and with a quick, proud toss of her head coldly said, "Not till my lord Duncan has humbly sued for pardon."

"Pardon for what?"

"For intended flight to the West without permission and leave-taking."

"Am I not, then, the master of my actions?" Duncan replied in a somewhat ruffled tone.

"Not if you expect my favor." Then, lowering her large, black eyes, and pointing authoritatively to the floor, she continued: "Down on your knees and confess you were attempting to act without my knowledge."

Duncan started angrily. He was nettled at the tone of authority she assumed, so he replied: "I will do nothing of the kind. I see no reason why my actions should be ac-

counted to, much less pardoned by, you."

"You big, foolish fellow," she laughingly said. "You have been spoilt by women. You expect that a declaration of independence delivered with so much bluster will anger me. Down on your knees and ask forgiveness."

Duncan jumped to his feet and paced the floor. He was too angry to speak at first, but he finally said in defiant tones: "I should think that my intended departure without your being informed of it, would be sufficient to advise you that your possible feelings on the subject were of supreme indifference to me."

"Indeed!" she replied, carelessly tossing aside the Bourget novel. "So I am to infer that Mr. Duncan Grahame, being weary of the woman upon whom he has previously pretended to bestow his favors, imagines that the easiest, and of course the most manly, way to rid himself of her is surreptitiously to steal away and leave her to discover his change of heart as best she can. Very well, so be it. But I really wish you would not molest that poor bear's head with the toe of your boot. If you have no regard for me,

you should, at least, consider the feelings of my rug."

She quietly commenced reading her book, and the careless and continued tapping of the little bronze-toed slipper on the rug seemed to emphasize her apparently complete absorption in the words of the French romancer. There is no man—or woman either—who will not chafe under the strain of indifference, and Duncan was no exception to the rule. Open war he relished, but to be dismissed with peremptory coldness when he had intended to be the aggressor was humiliating to the strongest sentiment of his nature, his pride. He silently watched her, trying, meanwhile, to formulate some plan of action. Angry words rose to his lips but were checked by prudence. He had lost his temper too much, he thought. His eyes carelessly wandered toward the book she was reading; "Cœur de femme" were the words printed across the yellow cover leaf. "If that Frenchman understands his subject," he thought, she will read somewhere in that book that a woman's heart adores its master and detests its slave. Bourget is an analyst of

nature, they say. Could he teach me more than that submission can never be success. Thank you, Monsieur Bourget; your yellow cover has given me an idea." Then, assuming an air of mock humility, he said: "I have been waiting to hear if you have anything further to add to your discharge."

She slowly raised her eyes from her book and said coolly, "Nothing whatever. I think you understand me perfectly; if you are satisfied I am." Then she turned again to the book, apparently vexed at the interruption.

"Very well," he replied. "Since the understanding is mutually perfect, please accept the conventional expressions of leave taking, and permit me to say 'adieu'."

"That is a favor you can easily obtain," she replied. "But pray spare me the task of calling a servant; this book is intensely amusing, and I feel sure you know all the doors of the house."

"By Jove, you are a keen one," Duncan muttered to himself; then he slowly walked to the door, put on his coat, took his hat, turned up his collar, opened the door, and descended the steps. "That woman," he

thought, "is a sportsman to the bone, but it will do her good to leave her for a while. She's a thoroughbred, though, and I wish I didn't love her."

Mrs. Osgood listened quietly until the door had shut and the sound of his steps had died away. "So he expected me to act like a school-girl," she said, half aloud. "Some women are fools, I suppose. I am glad he did not bluster any more. I hate a man who loses his temper. So, Mr. Duncan, you want to leave me. You have my permission; but you will soon be back, and then perhaps you will hear me tell you that I—no you won't, for I want to keep your handsome, curly head all for myself."

CHAPTER III.

TWO WOMEN.

We have all seen a manly young fellow go up to college. Full of life and vigor, he sees the world before him; but the thought of all its battles rouses no fear in his young heart, and, though his pranks are boyish and his manners rough, he stumbles good humoredly and persistently on into success. His upper classmen patronizingly smile upon him, while his natural enemy, the Soph, taunts and teases him, but is sometimes brought down and punished by his strong, young arms. Youthful, growing Chicago reminds one of this college boy. She has left the school of preparation and has taken her place among the great cities of the earth, where, full of energy and life, she is fighting her way to the front. Her mature colleagues of the Old World smile patronizingly at her efforts, but doubt her powers; while the cities of the East, seeing in her a young rival, taunt

and ridicule her with jealous anger. She is young; but strong and active; and if she is sometimes carried away by the very energy of her youth, she is never daunted, and the older cities of the East have already felt the vigor of her sinewy grasp. Chicago, with her broad avenues and stupendous buildings, her spacious parks and stately homes, her far-reaching railways and towering chimneys, her bustling marts and busy, surging crowds of active men and women, is the archetype of American energy,—the creation of yesterday and the marvel of to-day. But the mortar is scarcely dry and the stones are still undimned by time. She is as the mason, the carpenter, and the builder have left her—crude and fresh, without the dignified stains of age, without the majestic polish which time alone can give. Her social structure, like her brick and mortar buildings, is solidly laid and firmly built, but new. Her people built Chicago and she is the best memorial of their energy. They are still young and vigorous; in them the ardor of the pioneer is scarcely dead; the lethargy of long-held wealth has yet to come.

In the library of an imposing, but new, grey

stone mansion on Chicago's Lake Shore Drive two women were dawdling together over Petrarch's "Canzoniere" in the original. A well-thumbed dictionary was in the lap of one, and by the other's side lay Volume IV. of Symond's "Renaissance in Italy." It was cold January, and the broad, low window showed the angry lake dashing against the great sea wall and splashing the sparkling spray far over the roadway. The moaning north wind furiously rattled the long casements and sent occasional puffs of smoke and cinders out from the brightly blazing hearth fire; but these outward signs of winter were unable to affect the inviting coziness of the apartment. Fortunately the decorator's work had stopped at the walls; so, although artistically arranged, it was also a room to live in. Though the chairs were carved to match the panels, they were also—pardon the term—sittable; and though the bindings on the low book-shelves blended well with the tapestries and rugs, the books themselves were readable. The same judgment which had chosen the books had selected bronzes and porcelain, tiles and tapestries, and the tasteful arrangement of

the art objects at once bespoke the dilettante.

The elder student of Italian lyrics, glancing up from the "Rime in vita e morte" said interrogatively to her friend: "I wish I knew, Florence, whether Madonna Laura were once a living woman or merely the divine creation of the poet's soul."

"I am sure she must have been a fancy," the other replied. "She is too ideal for flesh and blood, and besides, she was married. I don't think it is natural for any man so sincerely to love another man's wife."

"You horrid girl! You forget that Petrarch was a poet."

"No, I don't, my dear Marion; but so were Shelley, Byron, de Musset, and scores of others. The same broad collar and velvet jacket often cover both an artistic temperament and a fleshly nature. Now I, for one, don't believe in pardoning in genius what we condemn in mediocrity. If Laura was an inspiration of Petrarch's soul, the poet has my admiration; if she was merely another man's wife with whom he was enamored,—no matter how delightfully he may have sung of her,—I lose respect for Petrarch."

"You have no appreciation of the beautiful, Florence."

"I appreciate the beautiful, but I also respect virtue. There is enough that is beautiful in this world but not enough that is good."

"O, you Philistine. How can you go on reading these exquisite lyrics and not soar above Puritan casuistry in the enjoyment of beauty for its own sake?"

"You misunderstand me, my dear. I never said that I did not appreciate the beauties of this rhythm and the subtleties of this language. What I mean is that I see no reason why a poet's errors should be pardoned because his quatrains are above criticism. Now Petrarch, by his own confession, was not exceptionally well-behaved, but whatever his morals may have been they should not be judged by his lyrics. Nor, for that matter, should his lyrics be judged by his behavior."

"You have lived in a New Hampshire village too long to view the world through the broad lenses of cosmopolitanism."

"I have been away from a New Hampshire village long enough to look through the sor-

did spectacles of worldliness, and I was glad enough to return to my Puritan blue glasses."

"Stop talking such nonsense, Florence. I don't believe a word of it. Here you are not quite twenty-four years old. You have had the same education I had; we went to the same school, studied the same books, lived in the same room, traveled about Europe together for nearly a year, met the same people, have almost the same tastes, and have spent a winter in Washington together, to say nothing of our countless letters to each other in the interim. The only real difference between us is that you were born in Fairville and I in Chicago, that I am married and you are not, and that I am fourteen months your senior; yet with all this affinity of tastes and education, you deliver a bit of straight-laced Calvanism which makes me shudder and smell sulphur and roasting flesh."

"I deny the implied accusation, although, if finding fault with the recklessness of life of the present day constitutes being a Puritan, I fear I shall be compelled to plead guilty. They say one's face is an index of one's character, so I suppose mine is as long as the

one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, and as narrow as it is long."

"No, Florence, you are a dissembler, for your sparkling blue eyes, bright cheeks, and soft brown hair are more Parisienne than Puritan, to say nothing of those white teeth and that sweet little mouth. No, my dear, there is nothing narrow about your face; in fact, I think it is almost round enough for a Breton peasant."

"You cruel woman! I shall never forgive you for such an insulting remark. You could say nothing worse except to call me buxom. I know I am not classic, or antique Etruscan, or Ptolemaic, but I don't think you need tell me to my face that I am *paysanne*."

"Don't lose your temper, dear. If I told the truth, I should say that your beauty is of that charming eclectic type which only America can produce. Intelligence and fidelity shine in your deep blue eyes, and any woman would give ten years of her life for your coloring, to say nothing of your superbly tall figure."

"I feel a trifle better, but I can't quite forgive you for the round face."

"If Miss Florence Moreland is still provoked, she may have revenge by telling me exactly what she thinks of my personal appearance and character as interpreted by my features."

"Mrs. Roswell Sanderson is most formal, but I assure her that if I speak, it will be to tell the truth."

"Come, Florence, I am really in earnest, and I promise not to be angry. I should so like to know exactly what you think of me."

"I think you are the dearest friend I ever had, and I don't intend to lose you by criticism."

"Nonsense, Florence, I promise not to be angry, and I feel that it will actually do me good."

"Well, if you will hear things quite as disagreeable as 'the round face,' here goes. I shall begin with your eyes. I believe novelists call them the lanterns of the soul. You have superb, dreamy, black eyes; eyes to fill a woman with envy or a man with love,—but they are both absent-minded and ambitious; they show a restless longing after unattained hopes. In other words, they are

dissatisfied and cold, but from an artistic standpoint that only enhances their attractiveness."

"You horrid creature! But I promised to be quiet, so go on."

"So much for the eyes; now the nose. It is exquisitely moulded and classic. I shall dismiss the nose as perfect."

"O, thank you so much."

"Now the mouth. It has a cupid's bow and it droops at the corners. I like your mouth, but I think it also looks dissatisfied. An artist would rave over it, but when his eyes fell on that transparently white complexion, and that glossy hair so artistically knotted at the back, I am sure he would think you were a creation of Phidias lost from the Elgin rooms of the British Museum. If you did call me eclectic, I must admit that your type is pure, unalloyed Greek; but I won't let you off altogether, for I consider your figure a trifle too stubby. Does that pay you up for 'the round face'?"

"I promised to keep my temper, so I will spare you; besides, I must confess that I did not come off so badly after all. 'The creation

of Phidias' was quite flattering; but what makes you think I look dissatisfied?"

"I am sure you should not look so, for of all women in the world you have the least to make you discontented."

"O, Florence, don't talk that way. You, who have been my best friend and my only confidante, ought to know that even the brightest surroundings have their shadows." Then Marion looked out over the angry, grey waters, and Florence saw in her deep, black eyes just the dissatisfied, longing look she had described.

"I think," said Florence, "that what you call shadows on your bright surroundings are but tarnish which neglect has left there. A little extra care will make all bright."

"I want sympathy, not sermons, Florence. I was brought up on texts and tracts, and the Westminster catechism was my daily nourishment."

"Why, Marion, dear, I don't want to preach; I want to help you; but it is hard for me to understand why you should not be perfectly happy. Your husband adores you; he is rich and denies you nothing; you are a leader in

society, young, handsome and admired. What more do you want?"

"I don't know, I really don't. If some fairy queen were to appear in a blaze of light and spangles out of that coal-scuttle and promise to fulfill any wish, I should be at a loss to tell her what I really want, but I am not happy. To myself I find fault with everything and everybody. Some people bore me, some people upset my nerves; at times I feel utterly lifeless, and at times I get into such a state of mind that I almost scream, and all over nothing at all. When I go out and meet the same old set over and over again,—and such a narrow, prosaic set at that,—it seems as though I should fairly go mad. What I want is a change. I am perfectly contented away from this depressing place. When I was in Washington last spring, I felt almost like another woman; in fact I don't believe it is anything but the provincialism of Chicago which is putting me in such states of mind."

"Don't be foolish, Marion. As though such a cause could make you discontented. If it does, then you don't appreciate your native

city. I like Chicago and I would rather visit here than in any place I know."

"Perhaps it is because your old friend, Harold Wainwright, lives here," said Marion insinuatingly. Just a tinge of color rose in her friend's cheeks, but she did not reply, so Marion continued: "You don't have to live here nine months in the year, and you don't know all the intricacies and peculiarities of our society."

"Perhaps I don't, but to me the peculiarities are all in Chicago's favor. I love the go-ahead spirit, and I love the lack of affectation among the people one meets."

"The go-ahead spirit you love," Marion replied, "is but an insatiable craving for the 'mighty dollar', and the lack of affectation resolves itself into a lack of *savoir faire*."

"Why, Marion, how can you say such things. You have friends here with as much knowledge of the world as any one."

"Yes, but how many? Perhaps fifty, or be liberal and say a hundred, and they were all brought up away from Chicago, or, like myself, have lived away from here a good many years of their lives. If they remain here long

enough they will stagnate like the natives."

"You unpatriotic rebel." I have almost a mind to denounce you to the people you are slandering."

"I am not slandering them. I am only speaking my convictions. You think I am captious, but I merely understand the subject, and I ought to, for heaven knows I have had a long enough experience. One has the choice here between parvenu vulgarity and Puritanic narrow mindedness. The one makes us the butt of the comic papers and the other is simply unbearable. I was brought up in the latter, and of course all ancient families,—that is to say, those dating from before the fire,—come under that eminently respectable classification, but I actually believe one would find the pork-packers more distracting."

"What do you call Puritanic narrow-mindedness, Marion?"

"I call it that carping sanctimoniousness which makes certain people throw up their hands in horror at the slightest appearance of advanced and civilized ideas. It is scarcely more than five years since a woman who wore décolleté evening gowns was one of the chosen

of Beelzebub, a warm meal on Sunday night was a sacrilege, and wine at dinner the creation of the Devil himself; but the people who hold such ideas will talk scandal by the hour while making red flannel shirts for heathen babies. I don't believe you know how a few of us have struggled to liberalize this city and raise its society a little above that of a country village."

"You are too bitter, Marion."

"No, I am not. You should have witnessed the tussle I had with mama, before I was married, in order to get livery on our coachman, and to abolish the anachronism of a one-o'clock dinner."

"It seems to me, Marion, that your criticisms apply to the Chicago of the past and not to the Chicago of to-day. I am sure I never endured a noon dinner, and as for the turn-outs one meets, many of them are quite as well appointed as one could desire."

"I grant you that, but then it is the same limited few that have wrought all these changes, and, improved as the city is, we have had to overcome almost insurmountable prejudices. I grant you that Chicago has passed

the chrysalis age. It is no longer a village but it is far from being a metropolis."

"You have everything here which makes a city: opera, theatres, parks, drives, shops, art galleries, libraries, restaurants, and even races. What more do you desire?"

"People, Florence; people. We want people with the instinctive sense of the fitness of things, people with refined tastes and cultivated minds, people whose souls are not bound up either in dollars or in psalms."

"Why, Marion! I can name you, off-hand, twenty as advanced and cultivated people as I ever met."

"Of course you can, and perhaps fifty more, but there you will have to stop. Three or four score of people do not make society."

"If you talk that way I shall believe you are more bigoted than the sanctified families you have just described. I really believe you go about conjuring up imaginable faults in your friends merely to carry out your ideas."

"Don't be nasty, Florence."

"No, my dear, I love you too much for that; but it is really dreadful for you to get into such states of mind. I think I under-

stand what you feel; you have led a nomadic existence, and you were educated in a different atmosphere. An acquaintance with three languages, a season in London, a winter in Washington, and a strong love of variety all combine to make you discontented with the life here. You want a kaleidoscopic existence, an ever shifting scene, and because you are here, a thousand miles from the nearest city worthy of the name, it is quite natural that you should tire of meeting the same people day after day. You think of London, New York, and Washington, where society is continually shifting, where new people come and go, where every one does not know or care about his neighbor's business; but, Marion, granting all this, are you not a little too bitter?"

"Perhaps; but just think of the lack of *savoir faire* that one finds here; the striving to do a thing correctly and missing it just sufficiently to ruin the effect."

"That is a criticism which might be applied to American society in general. It is only a poor imitation of the English model. For my part, I almost wish we could go back to

pumpkin-pie and Johnny-cake. I wish we could go 'buggy riding with our beaux' and 'spark in the back parlor.' It was all more original, and, what is more to the point, more American."

"You fairly make me shudder, Florence. Where did you get such Jeffersonian ideas?"

"In my New Hampshire home, perhaps; but despite my patriotism, I recognize that the buggy and the back parlor have gone never to return. I don't regret it, either, for I am just as fond of refinement as you are; but what I do object to is the introduction of extraneous ideas which are contrary to the spirit of Americanism. I love Chicago because it is fairly American, and represents more truly than the older cities the Yankee spirit which made us a free people. You may have vulgar parvenus here, but where are they not to be found? This may be the only large city where New England Puritanism affects society, but it is, at least, American, and better than European immorality. There may be only a few people here who are initiated into the esoteri s of manners and manias, but how many good husbands, loving

wives, and happy children are there among your rich! you may dine at seven o'clock and go to dances at ten; some of you may talk with a twang and pronounce *u* like double *o;* but how many snobs and sycophants, how many unemployed and dissipated men, how many intriguers and gamblers have you in Chicago society? For my part I love refinement and *les petits soins* as much as you do, Marion; but if we can't have the good of European life without the bad, if we can't cultivate manners without vices, better far go back to sewing bees and church sociables, and keep our morals pure; better have baked beans and blue laws than truffled capon and depravity. There, I feel quite exhausted, but I have had my say."

"Really, Florence, you almost take my breath away. I have not heard such a screeching of the American eagle since I can remember. It ought to make me very much ashamed, I suppose, but somehow the flapping of the bird of freedom's wings never did inspire me."

"I positively refuse to quarrel any more, but I do wish you could feel different; you

would be so much happier," Florence replied.

"O, it is of no use. I am discontented by nature, I suppose. My ideals are too high, my realities too low. Success among people of rank, reputation, and intellect, is what I desire; a position among merchants, manufacturers, and shop-keepers is what I have. For intellectual variety I read a few papers before the Renaissance Club, and meet such occasional notables as stop over here long enough to view the stock-yards. I am the wife of a Chicago banker with all the prerogatives of that position, but nothing more, and with no prospect of being anything more."

"Nothing short of a coronet and a Court appointment would satisfy you, I fear. As for merchants and shop-keepers, all American society is composed mainly of them or their spendthrift children. But I am firm in my intention not to argue any more, so let us go back to Madonna Laura. If you want to feel better satisfied with Chicago, think about the sickening spectacle of Roman society at the time of Petrarch, and the futile efforts of his friend, Rienzi, to regenerate it."

"We sha'n't have time either for reading or

discussion before dinner. There is Roswell's key in the door, and he was never known to leave the office before six o'clock. What gown are you going to wear? Something charming, as usual; but don't forget that the drapery in the Auditorium is old gold plush."

"Why, Marion, I had quite forgotten we were going to the Opera to-night. Tamagno in 'Otello': that will be a treat."

CHAPTER IV.

IN AN OPERA BOX.

A long and motley line of carriages was slowly arriving at the Auditorium entrance. A surging, gaping crowd was jostling the few policemen on duty and trying to catch a glimpse of the brilliant dresses of the women hurrying into the lobby. Long, furry wraps and covered heads, perhaps a gleam of hidden diamonds, were all they saw; but it was a passing glance into a forbidden, dazzling world. Footmen scurried, doors were slammed, horses stamped, and husky-voiced policemen called out orders to the coachmen. A long awning covered the carpeted walk, and electric lamps shed a brilliant light upon the muffled comers and the eager faces of the waiting crowd. It was not a wan, hungry crowd of starving beggars, such as often surrounds a foreign theater; it was not a silent, wondering crowd; but American-like, it was cheerful and humorous, envious, perhaps, but merry in its envy.

It laughed and gibed at every novelty, and its jokes were shared alike by the smart English coachmen and the driver of the antiquated family "carry-all." It was impudent, too, but it was the impudence of the great Republic,—the bold assertion of freedom and prosperity.

In the crowded lobby long lines of people were depositing wraps at the cloak-room windows, some were standing in little groups, and hundreds of others were passing up the grand marble staircase into the hall above; Libretto sellers' cries and the scurrying tread of many feet upon the hard mosaic mingled with the distant strains of music, and scores of glittering lights shone upon the marble walls, and the countless, brilliant dresses of the moving throng. On into the great hall the people went. Five thousand seats were being filled, and, tier above tier, they rose like a section of a Roman theatre. Two rows of boxes lined the sides. Delicate wall tints and carefully toned lights blended softly with pretty faces and many colored gowns. The colors were an artist's work and masterly was it done. Up from the stage rose a mass

of faces. An unbroken multitude it was, grand and impressive. Down at the front a little man was frantically leading an army of skilled musicians, whose rhythmical efforts filled the noble audience-room with the overture of Verdi's masterpiece, and as the last note rolled far away, up into the balcony loft, and was lost amid the subdued whisperings and rustling programmes, the lights were dimned, the stately curtain slowly rose, and ten thousand hands applauded a welcome to the great singer from distant Italy. Thousands of music lovers wonderingly listened to the amazing power and range of Tamagno's voice, hundreds stood at the back of the amphitheatre, and even the little swinging gallery away up in the eaves was crowded with humble enthusiasts. But there were a conspicuous few whose whisperings and laughter mingled with the artist's notes; a few whose bids were highest at the auction sale of boxes, and whose tardy, noisy coming accentuated their social prominence and exasperated every lover of good music and good manners.

Among these was Mrs. Roswell Sanderson, who, with her husband, Florence Moreland,

and Mr. Walter Sedger, had just entered a box, in the upper, left-hand tier.

"What a superb audience-room," said Florence Moreland as she put aside her fur-lined cloak and took her opera glass out of its case. "How beautifully it lights up. I don't think I ever saw a finer sight."

"Do you think so, Florence?" replied Marion Sanderson. "To me it is just like everything else Chicago produces, stupendous and gaudy. They have tried to make an opera house, a concert hall and a convention room, and, consequently, have produced a building which is neither fish, flesh, nor fowl."

"What do you mean?" asked Florence.

"I mean that as an opera house it is a woful failure. They have shoved two tiers of boxes off at the sides and have given the entire house up to seats; they have put in a hideous organ where the proscenium boxes ought to be, and have invented all manner of machines for lowering the roof and shutting off the galleries; and as for those miserable little columns holding up that balcony, they are simply ridiculous."

"Marion very seldom admires home productions," Roswell Sanderson interposed.

"That is just the trouble," added Florence. "For my part I admire the progressive spirit which prompted the architect to depart from conventional ideas. If there are no boxes at the back, every one can see and hear, and I think that mass of people rising gently from the stage one of the most superb sights one could wish to see. The effects of the Paris and Vienna opera houses are not to be compared to it."

"Don't be so disagreeably contradictory to all I say," retorted Marion.

"I sha'n't for the present, dear, because I wish to hear some of that glorious music. You must not take what I say seriously."

Then they were silent, for, unconsciously, they were brought under the spell of the great tenor's art.

"What a divine voice that man has," said Florence, as the curtain slowly fell after the first act. "I fairly held my breath during that high *C*. Mr. Sedger, please applaud, and help bring him out. There he comes! Bravo, bravo, Tamagno!"

"I did the best I could, Miss Moreland," Walter Sedger said, after the applause of two

recalls had died away. "But do you really enjoy this music so much? For my part I prefer opera-bouffe."

"I admire your frankness, Mr. Sedger," she replied. "There are so many people who adore Wagner because he is the fashion, and sneer at Verdi and the Italian school, when, if the truth were known, they have not the slightest conception of the good qualities of either. For my part I like any music from a hurdy-gurdy up, though an extended term of suffering under a German professor has finally produced a taste for such music as Verdi has given us in 'Otello', which seems to me quite as remarkable as some of Wagner's masterpieces."

"Well, I am glad you enjoy it, Miss Moreland, but I fear my education did not extend beyond the 'Mikado' and 'Ermine'; so when it comes to grand opera I must confess my pleasure is confined to the *entre acte*. I love to see the people, and if it were not for being rude I think I should be tempted to run down to the club while the curtain is up."

"You have my permission, Mr. Sedger, but tell me who is that good-looking man with Mr. Wainwright, coming down this way?"

"He is a New Yorker; Duncan Grahame is his name. I met him at the club this afternoon."

"What is he doing here? One always seems to ask what a stranger is doing in Chicago: I don't know why, I am sure."

"He is out here on business in connection with an elevator trust. He seems to be a capital fellow, and, as he is a member of the Staten Club, I suppose he needs no further patent of respectability. But here he comes, so you can judge of him for yourself."

The two men of whom they were speaking entered the box. Harold Wainwright spoke to the ladies and introduced his friend. Mrs. Sanderson offered Duncan a seat beside her and said: "I have heard of you quite frequently, Mr. Grahame, from a friend in New York, Miss Sibyl Wright, and I think you should be grateful for having such an enthusiastic admirer."

"Doubly so considering that she is a woman and it was to you she spoke. I also have heard of you from scores of people in the East, and I made Wainwright introduce me at the first opportunity. I arrived only this morning, and

I assure you I am quite without a guiding hand."

"You make me smile and frown by turns," she replied. "I was tempted to feel flattered at the first part of your speech, but if it is a question of any shade in the desert, I shall not feel strongly inclined to offer you my protection in the Chicago wilderness."

"I think it would be advisable to interpret my speech as a compliment, as I seldom make them."

"Really, Mr. Grahame, I am tempted to call you rude."

"It is not rudeness but frankness, I assure you, and I spoke the truth. I have really been most anxious to meet you, and now that my desire has been gratified I trust you will not be so cruel as to let the frown remain. There goes the curtain. I am going to beg permission to return after the next act."

"You deserve punishment for your rudeness, so I refuse to grant it. As a penance for your offense I shall expect you to remain where you are during this entire act and devote your energies to amusing me."

"I suppose I must submit, but please

talk to me, as I am not bold and feel sure that your friend is a musical fiend who is quite prepared to cast furious glances at me should I be audacious enough to speak above a whisper."

"I see you are an analyst of character."

"Rather more of a synthesist, I imagine. I collect what both enemies and friends say of an individual and then build his character from those materials."

"How horrible! I trust you will never try your method on me."

"I have done so already."

"You wretch! What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have heard considerable about you in New York, and that I dined with six men at the City Club this evening. You were the one person in Chicago I was most desirous of meeting, so I managed to collect some most useful materials from which I have built my estimate of your character."

"I must call that the boldest piece of assurance I ever heard of."

"Why any more so than for me to judge you by my own impressions? My method is more judicial. As in a court of law, I

hear both sides of a case, and do not permit myself to be biased by personal charms."

"You are a clever pleader. I feel tempted to throw myself on the mercy of the court and receive its verdict."

"Before the verdict can be given the court must be cleared of reporters; as that seems impracticable, sentence must be deferred."

"Is it then so horrible? If so, I shall feel tempted to 'jump bail'."

"I think you have nothing to fear; but how did you acquire such a knowledge of the law?"

"At one time I had a passion for reading accounts of trials, and I even went with a party to see the Anarchists when they were on trial."

"What a morbid curiosity!"

"Another impertinence."

"If it is so considered, I humbly ask pardon, and meanwhile I move that the court take a recess which shall be employed in instructing me in the intricacies of Chicago society."

"I see you want more material with which to construct characters; if so, we had far better listen to the opera."

"O, bother the opera! It is vulgar to listen to an opera; it shows a lack of conversational powers. Don't you think so?"

"One can easily see that you came from New York, and, like all New York men, I suppose you expect to be pampered."

"Of course I expect it, so please tell me about those people in the opposite boxes. You need not fear to speak the truth, as I am an entire stranger."

"If I do, as a friend I shall expect you to let my opinions go no further."

"*Cela va sans dire.*"

"You must first understand, then, that every man here has an employment. We have absolutely no 'unemployed rich'."

"Idleness must be at a premium."

"On the contrary it is tabooed. However, though we are all in trade we have distinctions as intricate as the most ancient aristocracy."

"How so?"

"In the peculiar meshes from which society is woven. For example: a wholesale dry-goods merchant is an aristocrat, a retailer a plebeian; a hotel keeper may be a lord, a

restaurant keeper a commoner; a car builder is a prince, a carriage builder a burgher; a brewer may be a count, a beer seller a churl; and so on, although even if a member of a certain trade is in society, his *confrères* may be without the pale."

"Much the same as in New York, only there hotels and dry goods are commoners, while tobacco and skins are lords."

"Yes, but at least society is older there. The skins have been buried for a generation or two."

"In some cases, yes, but in others they are still uncured. I am a working man myself, and I must defend my class."

"But surely you have respect for established institutions."

"Yes, but not for dead ancestors. Suppose I search through the dusty archives of the Herald's College for a drop of Norman blood; I find that it was spilt on Saxon land by some hireling freebooter, or landgrabber, who followed at the heels of a conscienceless adventurer."

"You are republican enough to please the taste of my friend, Miss Moreland."

"I fear you misunderstand me. I am not patriotic, or republican, or anything else, for that matter."

"Except the incarnation of contrariety."

"I hate polemics, so I will cry *touché* as one does in fencing after a thrust, and end the contest."

"You mean you would rather thrust than parry. You men are all alike. You told the truth when you expressed a fondness for being pampered, and, as it is the duty of our sex to be compliant, I await your pleasure."

"If I am to be so indulged, I confess to feeling a craving to hear the promised lecture about those people across the way."

"I would willingly comply but that falling curtain says it must again be deferred. On second thought, perhaps it would be better to give you an object lesson, so if you will come and see me to-morrow about five, I will take you to a tea where you may meet them all and judge for yourself."

"I see you mean to prevent my favorite method of character study. I fear you will succeed, as the enticing preventive you sug-

gest cannot possibly fail to be effectual. I willingly submit to your cure and will come to you at the appointed hour."

The fall of the act drop was followed by a confused fluttering of dresses and hum of voices; people stretched and rose, talked, or wandered toward the foyer, while hundreds of glasses were leveled at the boxes, and every one of mark or notoriety was scrutinized by hundreds of eyes and criticised by hundreds of tongues. Society was there paraded in two rows of little pens, labeled and ticketed at so many millions per head, to be gazed upon by the curious and envious of that great throng. Society was the operatic side-show, and society paid dearly for the privilege of being seen.

"Do you like to be gazed at by a crowd, Mr. Grahame?" said Florence, after a momentary silence.

"Yes, I think I do," he replied. "It makes one feel so superior to be up above, looking down on the 'madding crowd'."

"Do you think so? I always feel like a caged animal at a menagerie, where each one who pays the admission fee can gratify the

curiosity he has about me, and poke me with his umbrella if he does not like my looks."

"How absurd; but I understand you are democratic in your feelings and object to class distinctions."

"Not in the least; on the contrary I believe in them. Nature herself has decreed that no two creatures can be equal. What I object to are inflated distinctions which rest on no foundation, and collapse completely when pricked by sound opinion."

"Miss Moreland believes in an aristocracy of merit," interposed Harold Wainwright.

"Yes," replied Florence, "but where is it to be found?"

"Not in a republic," retorted Duncan. "A democracy is a breeding ground of plutocrats."

"Perhaps, when its Government discourages every intellectual pursuit," replied Wainwright. He felt strongly the ungratefulness of republics, as his father had been a Federal judge on a miserly salary, with no pension after years of faithful service.

"I quite agree with you, Harold," replied Florence, "and I only wish I were a man."

"Why?" interposed Mrs. Sanderson, who had just finished interchanging polite platitudes with Walter Sedger.

"So that I might express my views about the evils of our political system."

"And be called by that expressive word which is not in the dictionary, 'a crank'," said Duncan ironically. "That is the reward of a reformer."

"John Bright and Wendell Phillips were both 'cranks' in their day," was the reply, "but I would not object to their reputation. By the way, here comes a 'crank' whom I almost love," she added, as a stout, kindly faced, elderly man, whose features wore the sweet expression of earnest and well guided intelligence, approached the box.

"Who is he?" asked Duncan, following her eyes.

"Dr. Maccanfrae, physician and philanthropist, missionary and moralist, and the dearest man in the world, besides," she replied. "He does more good in a day than twenty Poor Boards do in a week, and has more genuine Christian charity in his soul than a score of average parsons, although he is an evolutionist and a pantheist combined."

"A most flattering description," said Duncan. "I hope he deserves such adulation."

"He certainly merits it all," added Wainwright.

Dr. Maccanfrae entered the box and Walter Sedger improved the opportunity to slip away and visit some friends. The Doctor spoke to Mrs. Sanderson, then moved toward the corner occupied by Florence Moreland, while Duncan dropped quietly into the seat left vacant by Mr. Sedger.

"What can bring so industrious a man as Dr. Maccanfrae to the opera?" said Florence as the Doctor took the seat beside her.

"The opera itself, Miss Florence. I am devoted to music and never lose an opportunity of hearing it well rendered. Isn't Tamagno doing grandly to-night?"

Her reply was interrupted by the appearance of a tall, plainly dressed woman, who, pencil and paper in hand, entered the box door. Her face was refined, though careworn, and bore the mark of better days. She hesitated for a moment, as though realizing fully her intrusive calling, then advanced toward Duncan. "May I ask you, sir, to give the

names of your party for the *Morning Stentor?*" she finally said.

"What does she mean?" said Duncan, turning to Mrs. Sanderson for an explanation.

"It is one of the peculiarities of Chicago life," she replied. "It is for to-morrow's society column."

"And do you give them the information?" he asked.

"O, yes, it is better to have it right, as they publish it anyway, right or wrong," she replied, and then she told the reporter the names.

"Might I trouble you to describe your dress?" was the next question asked. "I am sorry to be so intrusive, but it is the city editor's orders, and we have to do the best we can."

"You are a woman, and understand such matters, so I think you had better do that yourself," Mrs. Sanderson replied.

The reporter thanked her and withdrew. When she had gone Duncan said wonderingly: "We have society reporters in New York, but they never go quite so far as to ask one to describe oneself. Who reads such particulars anyway?"

"Ask Dr. Maccanfrae, he is wiser than I," she replied.

"Dr. Maccanfrae, who should you say read the society columns of the newspapers?" he asked.

"People who expect to find their names in print, and people who think their names ought to be in print, to say nothing of those who read society columns, as they do society scandals, in order to get a reflection of the tinsel and tarnish of an unknown world."

"That must include a great portion of newspaper readers," replied Duncan.

"Precisely; that is why society scandals and fashions occupy so large a portion of our papers," the Doctor replied. "But there comes the conductor, so I must get back to my place."

"Won't you remain here, Doctor?" said Mrs. Sanderson.

"No, I thank you. I only came in to pay my respects, and, as I have a musical friend with me, I must get back to him."

The Doctor hurried away and the little man away down in front lifted his baton. Ninety musicians watched the beat of the first bar,

and, as the baton fell, sixty bows moved in unison, and trumpets, horns, trombones, and reeds, added their strains, while the act drop slowly rose disclosing the great stage, gorgeously set as Otello's audience-chamber.

"I must tell you an amusing tale about 'Otello,'" whispered Mrs. Sanderson to Duncan Grahame. "I was in Rome when the opera was brought out there, and went with the American minister and his wife. Revere was their name and they came from Tallahassee. He had been a congressman, but she had never been away from home until she went as the wife of our representative in Austria, so you can imagine her ignorance of the world. She watched the opera quietly until she noticed that the black Otello bore some relation to the white Desdemona. That made her hem and fidget, but when Otello embraced his wife, she put up her fan in disgust, and said indignantly to me: 'How outrageous! I assure you such conduct would not be tolerated in Tallahassee.'"

Grahame laughed, and then they listened to the grand music of Verdi for a while, but it was not the opera which inspired their in-

terest, for the subtle spell of similarity seemed to arouse the sympathy of kindred taste. Bright phrases and pleasing words flashed between them, and quickly another act passed. Again the people rose and talked, again visitors came to the box and uttered conventional insipidities. Finally Roswell Sanderson himself returned. He had passed the evening in the manager's office with some friends, but his wife did not even express a curiosity to know it. The curtain rose on the last act. "Come," said Wainwright to Duncan, "we must go back to our seats. Good-night, Mrs. Sanderson." "Good-night, Mr. Grahame." "*A demain*," said Duncan, and he was off. Another act of the opera was rendered, then the great house was slowly emptied, and hundreds of carriages bore their occupants away. The lights went out, the weary artists hurried home, the Auditorium was left cold, silent and deserted.

CHAPTER V.

A CHALLENGE.

Marion Sanderson's surroundings kept her in a continual state of irritation. Her fancy created an ideal life with harmonious environments and sympathetic friends, but the reality was what she termed "an utterly commonplace existence." From early childhood her parents and acquaintances had jarred upon her, so that her fanciful mind had carried on incessant warfare with her prosaic surroundings. Her father and mother were respectable representatives of practical Calvanism, who, endeavoring to make their child a pillar of the Church, had persistently combated her natural tendencies. For days at a time, during her younger years, the poor child would obediently follow the routine of prayer prescribed for her until worn out by the drastic Scotch tenets; then rebellious tears would flow, and she would permit some natural sentiments to escape from her impulsive heart. Such out-

bursts most frequently occurred on Sunday, and they invariably called from her mother's lips the time-tried reproof: "I think, Marion, you forget the day. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." Resentful and disgusted the child would expostulate, only to be frigidly denounced as one possessed of an evil spirit; then she would rush to her room and remain for hours sobbing and yearning for sympathy. "Fox's Book of Martyrs," "The Church at Home and Abroad," and "Baxter's Saints' Rest" were her literary diet, but she managed to devour, surreptitiously, romance after romance, and her greatest pleasure was to live over, in fancy, the lives of those she had read about. Thus for fifteen years the restless child tugged unsuccessfully at the parental tethers till relief came from an unexpected quarter.

Marion's mother, despairing of her child's spiritual welfare, decided curiously enough, to send her abroad to the care of her sister-in-law, the wife of the United States minister to France. This aunt, being a woman of broad sympathies and experience, questioned the girl about her education, and, finding that

it had been confined to the three R's and the Westminster catechism, decided to send her to school. So Marion was forthwith ensconced in a select *pension* patronized by the Faubourg St. Germain nobility. Here a new life was opened to Marion, and, freed from her childhood's restraints, she eagerly sought companionship with these girls of a different world. She learned a new language and new sentiments, and though novels were forbidden in the school, the pages of Balzac, Mérimée, Sand and Gautier, surreptitiously read, fed her fancy with new impressions and created new aspirations. Florence Moreland was the only other American in the school, and to her Marion was attracted by the very oppositeness of her nature. The frank practicality and keen perception of Florence fascinated her, and although the two girls disagreed on most subjects, a warm affection always kept their hearts united.

Marion left the *pension* at the age of seventeen. By that curious process of expatriation which few but Americans can successfully undergo, her childhood's sentiments had been removed, and European ideas had been en-

grafted in their place. Her aunt, who during Marion's *pension* days had vibrated between Paris and the Riviera, now took her for a few months of travel. Florence was invited to accompany them, and after making the conventional summer-garden tour of the Continent, they went to Nice for the winter. There the two girls studied Italian and mixed in the quasi Anglo-European society of the place—certainly not the best for a girl first to enter.

The transfer of Marion's uncle to the English mission brought them to London, and they were just enjoying the excitement of a first season when Marion's parents ordered her home. A child when she left Chicago, she was now a woman. Her home, which had been uncongenial before, was now intolerable. Her life became a continual struggle against the prejudices of her parents. She longed to pull down the sombre drawing-room curtains and pitch the stiff-backed, haircloth chairs out of the window; but her father, though a millionaire, would brook no change. Still she struggled on, demanding an alteration in the dinner hour, wine at table and the discarding of the family carry-all. "Do you want

me to open the house to Satan?" her mother asked in horrified tones. "I want you to be civilized beings and not anchorites," she replied. Her mother's friends were practically limited to the communicants of the Knox Presbyterian Church, but such a society only served to exasperate her more. To her the men were stupid slaves of business and the women narrow-minded prudes. There was a progressive set whose companionship she desired, but in her mother's mind they were the Devil's chosen, and were consequently forbidden the house. In desperation Marion sought relief and it came in the shape of a husband. Roswell Sanderson was vice-president of her father's bank, rich, prominent, and,—what was more to her,—liberal-minded. He asked her to be his wife, and, without analyzing her feelings further than the sense of gratefulness which she felt, she accepted him. After a brief engagement they were married and her new life began.

Marion's husband was a country boy who had been sent to an Eastern college; and possessing American energy and perception in a marked degree, he rapidly won a place in

the first rank of Chicago business men. He was a man of broad ideas and sympathies, but lacked the delicate veneer of manners which distinguishes the cosmopolite from the provincial. In Marion's eyes this fault soon became greatly magnified. His flat pronunciation and Western inflection, his cordial, unstudied manner and hearty laughter so mortified her that in the presence of those who were capable of recognizing his shortcomings, her manner became apologetic. His open-hearted frankness, which made him a friend of high and low, so rasped her ideas of convention that all sense of sympathy was distroyed, and her married life was no more congenial than that at home had been. Roswell never criticised her actions, so she was enabled to seek relief in society. She saw the gradual enlargement and improvement of Chicago but she was able to pick flaws in the struggles of society to break the shackles of provincialism, and she longed to hasten the *metropolizing* process. Unlike Florence Moreland she could not admire the vigor and freshness of Western life, but permitted herself to suffer from intense mortification at the faults

which others would have passed unnoticed. Marriage and society having failed to supply the happiness she desired, she turned to books. Her selections of reading, however, were destined to intensify her restlessness, for in the pages of Daudet, Bourget and de Maupassant she found the anomalies of human weakness painted in brilliant and exculpatory colors. The clever portraitures of these subtle analysts created a spirit which caused her to explain her eccentricities of feeling by comparison with the emotions described in their yellow-covered records. She became a disciple of the modern philosophy of introspection, which, unlike that of the stoic and anchorite, is not intended to humble desire, but to create a morbid craving for the unattainable. Recognizing that the absorbing passion of her life was yet to come, she scrupulously analyzed each impulse she felt and resolved it into infinitesimal atoms of feeling, which again were subjectively compared with the minutest details of her analytical romances. The consequence was that her emotions were kept in a state of continual irritation, and ordinary pleasures becoming less and less gratifying,

a desire for new excitements and experiences was created. It was in such a state of mind that Florence Moreland had found her, and, since the latter's arrival in Chicago she had striven unsuccessfully to dispel the spirit of depression which had taken possession of her friend.

On the afternoon of the day following the performance of "Otello," Florence, cold and rosy from tobogganing, burst into the drawing room. She expected to find Marion in one of her moods, and she was astonished to find her dressed to go out and carelessly strumming on the piano. Marion looked up, and, seeing Florence, burst into laughter at her tousled locks and red cheeks. "You had better stand over the register and get thawed out," Marion remarked cheerfully; then, thumping the piano again, she continued: "How was the slide?"

"Capital! and hundreds of people there," was Florence's reply. Then, wondering at Marion's sudden change of spirits, she added, "Are you going to the McSeeney's tea?"

"Yes; I intend to take Mr. Grahame."

"I suppose I shall have to get there the best way I can."

"You can take the brougham. What do you think of him?"

"Who, the brougham?"

"No; Mr. Grahame, you silly."

"O, he is like many New Yorkers, one-third clothes and two-thirds conceit. I asked him if he thought he should like Chicago, and, knowing I was from the East, he confidently replied: 'It is not New York, you know, but I suppose one can get used to anything in time.'"

"I don't care, I like him," Marion replied.

"Hush, here he comes," said Florence hurriedly.

A servant announced Mr. Grahame, and as Duncan entered, Marion said in a somewhat surprised tone, "Are you always so prompt?"

"No; it is quite a mistake, I assure you," he replied. "I will not be so vulgarly exact next time."

"It is a provincialism quite permissible in the West," said Marion.

"Indeed! But I have not yet said good afternoon," replied Duncan; "have you recovered from the dissipation of last evening?"

"Quite."

"And you, Miss Moreland?"

"Look at her cheeks, Mr. Grahame," interjected Marion.

"I see it is needless to ask about your health, Miss Moreland, but I trust I may say I admire your snow costume."

"You must have a fondness for brilliant colors," said Florence.

"Decidedly; shades and tints were made for funerals and frowns," he replied.

"I don't like to interrupt," interposed Marion hurriedly, "but I fear it is time for Mr. Grahame and me to be going."

"Are you not to accompany us, Miss Moreland?" said Duncan.

"Not in this costume, certainly," laughed Florence.

"Then I shall say *au revoir*."

"Where am I to be taken?" said Duncan, as he and Marion descended the steps of the house.

"To meet my most bitter enemy, Mrs. McSeeney," she replied.

"I admire your courage," he said.

"O, there is no danger of bodily harm, as we are quite on speaking terms; a sort of armed neutrality, you know."

"Am I to be used as an offensive or a defensive weapon?" Duncan asked.

"Neither; I shall use you as a flag of truce; but whatever happens don't you dare to say she is good looking or brilliant."

"I promise," he answered, "but please tell me who she is and what she is."

"You ought to know her; she is a New Yorker,—at least she was three years ago—her husband is the president of an elevated railway company and made her come here to live. She hates Chicago, and takes her revenge by saying disagreeable things about it. For some reason she has singled me out as the particular object of her antipathy and you can imagine there is no love lost between us. But here we are at her door, so I can't tell you any more."

They had reached an awning-covered doorway where numerous carriages were arriving and depositing their occupants. They ascended the steps and were ushered into a crowded room where a well dressed throng were jostling about and trying to keep off one another's toes. Near the door Mrs. McSeeney was undergoing the laborious exper-

ience of greeting her friends, while about the room Mrs. Nobody could be heard cackling loudly and Mrs. Somebody peeping meekly, while Mr. Smart was smirking and Mr. Plain was awkwardly striving to interest ugly Miss Crœsus. It was a prattling, garrulous society. The world over it is the same, differentiated by race and place, perhaps, but still society.

Duncan was taken about and introduced to scores of people whose names he did not even hear. A smile here and a word there was all he had time for, but he managed to meet all "the people one should know," and, being a new man, caused a flutter of expectation among the women. "Who is he?" "What is he?" "Where is he from?" were the questions asked by all, but they scarcely received a satisfactory answer before Marion hurried Duncan into an adjoining room where numerous pretty girls were dispensing that universal anodyne of modern life, tea. What should we moderns do without tea? It is the prop of society, and without this precious Chinese plant we might still be cupping the sack, and beating our wives between the

draughts. In fact a noted moralist has said that "tea has checked our boisterous revels, raised women to a new position, refined manners, and softened the character of men." Perhaps! but let a man with a full cup of tea, and the spoon balanced on the edge of the saucer, try to rise from a low chair and shake hands; then ask him what he thinks about the effect of tea on a man's character.

After responding scores of times to the question, "How do you like Chicago?" with the reply, "I don't know," and after answering quite as frequently and in the same manner the question, "How long do you expect to remain here?" Duncan was finally rescued by Marion Sanderson and taken away.

"You don't often have strangers here, do you?" Duncan gasped when they were outside. "I seem as much of a curiosity as a white man on the Congo."

"Not quite so bad as that," Marion laughed, "though I must confess a new man is an attraction here, especially at a tea, where there are at least two women to every one of the other sex."

"I suppose the natives are frightened away."

"No, you wretch, they are all in business."

"Lucky beggars."

Marion gave him a side glance intended to be annihilating, and silently walked the few remaining steps. When they reached her door she stopped and said, somewhat coldly: "Won't you come in, Mr. Grahame?"

"I certainly will, as I cannot leave with the mercury of your manners so low."

"You surely do not fancy that you can make it rise."

"I do," he said confidently.

Marion looked at him scornfully, but it was an assumed scorn; as to herself she admitted a fondness for assurance like Duncan's. Florence Moreland would have called it presumption, but Marion felt that it indicated a strong nature worthy of careful analysis. Her manner was often the naïveté of inexperience. She fancied that she knew the world, but her knowledge was theoretically culled from her yellow-covered romances. She frequently allowed men a freedom of speech which might be misunderstood at times, and excused herself by the thought that such carelessness became a woman of the world. She courted

admiration because she felt it to be her due, and in her search for experiences of the world she often displayed an artlessness which was singularly liable to be misinterpreted by the men with whom she came in contact.

Just inside the door on the right of the hall was a wee room decorated in *Louis Quinze* style, and into this they went. Delicate and cozy, with a polished floor, a leopard's skin rug, soft tinted walls, white and gold woodwork, a tiny open fire, a brocade screen, a chair or two and a tête-a-tête seat,—it was, in fact, a delightful expression of Marion's taste.

"Charming," said Duncan as he sat down opposite Marion on the tête-a-tête and looked about him.

"I am glad something pleases you," she replied as she threw aside her jacket. "Your assurance amazes me," she continued. "Last night you told me you had been about collecting bits of gossip about me in order to understand my character, and now you coolly inform me that you are capable of influencing my feelings. I ought to detest you."

Duncan silently looked with his large, grey eyes into her face for a moment and then said, "I wish you would."

"Why?" she questioned wonderingly.

"Because we might end by being friends."

"A repellent manner of attracting, certainly," she replied.

"Exactly! kindred natures always repel one another with a force equal to their subsequent attraction."

"That sounds like a proposition in physics."

"In metaphysics, perhaps," he answered. "It means that if we first quarrel we shall eventually become sympathetic friends."

"Polemical enemies, I should say," Marion replied sharply.

"Why?"

"Because I am not willing to admit I am of so changeable a nature," she replied.

"A mediocre nature will never change; an uncommon one invariably does," he said confidently.

"Another slur."

"A compliment, I should say, as your opinion of me will change."

"On what do you base your presumption?" she said with assumed indignation.

He was silent. She glanced about the room. It was nearly dark and the fire was flickering

on the hearth. Unconsciously she looked up as though seeking an answer to her question. Again two grey eyes looked softly through the twilight into her own. "Because I feel certain of it," he said quietly and emphatically, as though in answer to her questioning glance.

"Then you shall acknowledge yourself mistaken," she slowly replied. "I'll give you a fair chance. Will you dine with us on Friday?"

"A day of ill luck, but I accept," he replied as he rose to go. "Shall it be a truce in the interim?" he added, offering his hand.

"If you like," she replied.

"Good-by," he said, taking her hand. "It shall be a fair game and I will play to win."

"But you will lose," she answered.

Her eyes followed him as he left the room. "An interesting nature to study," she thought, "but I wish he would not look at me in that way."

CHAPTER VI.

SPANISH CASTLES.

Mrs. Sanderson had arranged designedly the dinner to which she had invited Duncan. He had been much in her thoughts in the interim, and, being anxious to see what method he would adopt to overcome her assumed enmity, she looked forward to their next meeting with curiosity. She was a strong impressionist, and when she had first heard him described by her New York friend, Sibyl Wright, she had mentally resolved that he was a person she would one day meet and like. She had also formed a picture of him in her mind, and, curiously enough, the likeness had been exact. She now felt that her impression had been a presentiment, and this thought appealed to her peculiarly constituted nature. She wanted to know Duncan better and analyze his character, so she arranged her table to further this desire, placing him at her right, and, as Florence Moreland did not like him,

she was given the next seat; next to Florence she put Harold Wainwright, feeling sure that they would both be oblivious to their neighbors, while about the table she maliciously scattered a trio of drawing-room musicians. There was Herr von Steubenblätter, a musical professor, Mdlle. de Longchamps, an amateur soprano, and Mr. John Smith, who, after studying singing in Italy and passing five years without an engagement, had now assumed the more euphonious name of Signor Frivogini. Besides these there were several inoffensive people who never said much, but who would consider it their duty to applaud the musicians and keep them employed after dinner, so that Marion and Duncan might talk unobserved.

Unfortunately Duncan's manner was not at all what she had expected. He talked to her about the most conventional and trivial subjects in a most conventional and trivial way, until about the second *entrée*, when he entered into a literary argument with Florence which lasted during the entire dinner. Both Marion and Wainwright considered themselves very much abused, and Marion in particular thought

that somehow her elaborate plans had failed and that Duncan was purposely neglecting her. She endeavored to listen to a discourse on the relative merits of canvas-back and red-head, delivered by an experienced diner on her left, but she felt much relieved when she was able to make the signal for the ladies to file out. When the men had finished their cigars and found their way to the drawing-room she boldly conducted Herr von Steubenblätter to the piano, trusting, from her experience of the opera, that Duncan would disregard the music and talk to her. Marion had provided a formidable array of drawing-room musicians, but they failed to serve the purpose for which they were invited. They played and sang in continuous succession, but Duncan, instead of taking a seat beside her and making the music a cloak for conversation, went to the other side of the room and sat down near pretty, smirking Miss Ender. There he chatted assiduously and made her giggle so loudly that Herr von Steubenblätter sent withering glances through his gold bowed spectacles which made the poor girl blush and stop simpering for two entire minutes.

Marion was furious with everything, but with Duncan most of all. She tried to conceal her anger and listen to the insipid chatter of an under-graduate, but her replies were generalities, delivered without reference to the sophomore's platitudes, and her thoughts were entirely across the room. "What did Duncan mean by such negligence? Why did he challenge her to a verbal combat and then refuse an engagement? Why had he appeared to be interested in her on one day and then utterly indifferent the next? It was in forming and revolving such questions in her mind that she passed the evening, and, meanwhile, the harmless college boy struggled and sputtered on.

At one end of the Sanderson drawing-room was a settee placed behind a few palms; although it was in the room, it was sufficiently hidden to remove people sitting there from the observation of others. When music had been suggested Florence Moreland and Harold Wainwright had wandered toward this seat. The two had been childhood friends and in later years the intimacy had continued. Harold had been left an orphan without fortune,

and Florence had always taken a deep interest in his success.

After leaving college Harold had come to the western metropolis and, by hard and creditable work had built up a flourishing law-practice. He was only twenty-seven and possessed in a marked degree the best qualities of young American manhood. He was one of those young men so numerous in Western cities, whose earnest and energetic characters, untouched by Old World follies and vices, make them the heirs of the pioneer of the past. Florence had admired Harold as a sister might admire a strong, splendid brother. She trusted and looked up to him, and she often confided her thoughts to him. He was a sympathetic friend, but that was all; she, at least, was not a lover.

"Do you know, Harold," Florence said, as they took their seats on the settee, "that we have not had one of our old talks since you were home last summer. There has been a succession of bothersome people to interfere ever since I arrived. Tell me, are you working as hard as ever?"

"Yes," he replied. "I am still toiling away, but to what end I don't know."

"That doesn't sound like you, Harold."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because you are not the man to mind the bumps in life's road. You can see beyond them."

Harold was silent; he seemed thoughtful; a little sigh escaped him. "Can I, Florence?" he finally said. "You know me better than I know myself. What can I see?"

"A successful career."

"Is that all?"

"No; friends."

"Of what use are they?"

"Dr. Johnson called friendship 'the cordial drop that makes the nauseous draught of life go down'."

"He was wrong."

"Why, Harold! you forget that I am your friend."

"No, Florence, I don't; I wish I could."

"How strangely you act to-night," she replied in puzzled tones. "I don't understand you."

"That cordial drop of friendship is a poison, sweet, subtle, and deadly," he answered mournfully.

Florence drew back, startled. "Harold, you forget the past," she said anxiously.

"I wish I could," he replied sadly. "I wish you were not my friend."

"Why?" she asked, frightened, and almost afraid to hear the reply.

"Because I love you, Florence," he slowly and earnestly replied. "If you were not my dearest friend you might love me, too."

She looked wonderingly into his face, almost expecting to read there that his words were in jest. She was so startled that the full meaning of what he said did not, at first, appear to her, but slowly she realized that this friendship that had lasted so long and had been so sweet must end. She covered her face with her hands as though hoping to hide this thought from her mind. "Why did you say it? Why did you say it?" she moaned. "It was so sweet before."

"It was in my heart, dearest; it has been there a very long time. I have tried to keep it friendship, but I couldn't." Harold slowly rose and stood beside her. "Forgive me," he continued. "I couldn't help it, Florence; I couldn't."

She took his hand; it was cold. "Forgive you," she said, "I have nothing to forgive."

His hand tightened about hers. "I love you, Florence," he said. "Will you be my wife?"

She raised her eyes and looked full into his face. "Would you marry your best friend?" she asked, her voice trembling slightly.

Calmly he returned her glance. "No," he replied. "Not unless she brought me the same love I gave."

"Then I cannot promise to be your wife," she said hesitatingly, as though the words were painful.

He released her hand slowly. "May I hope that some day it will be different?"

"Let us both hope so," she replied. They remained silent and motionless, each feeling that an epoch of life had come; each wondering what futurity concealed. Perhaps a minute passed, though it seemed much longer, then Florence spoke. "We had better not remain here, Harold, the world sometimes misunderstands even friends."

He walked silently beside her, back to where the others were. Duncan saw them approaching and took the opportunity to leave Miss

Ender. Harold felt that he could not endure the laughter and merriment about him; so he left Florence with Duncan and wandered off to the dark, silent library across the hall. Florence, too, wanted to be alone; but she could see no way to evade Duncan, and so she was left to talk to a man for whom she had an instinctive distaste.

"I see you are independent in society as well as in politics, Miss Moreland," Duncan said, as soon as Harold had left them.

"In what way?" she replied inquiringly.

"Instead of remaining here to be bored by bad music, you were independent enough to desert."

"Perhaps the bad music drove me away. Real independence cannot be driven."

"Even in that you are original; society is not driven, it meekly follows its leaders."

"You seem decided to have me a caprice of nature," she replied.

"I think you are."

"Is that impudence or irony?"

"Neither. I am an evolutionist and you aid my theories. I believe one of the proofs of Darwinism lies in the imitative sense possessed

by the individuals composing American society. When some strange animal from across the water comes among us, we try to copy every grimace and action, until someone else arrives with new affectations and mannerisms, when we begin all over again. We, as a race, are not sufficiently developed to possess originality; we are still a species of the genus ape. Now you, Miss Moreland, are the only member of American society I have yet discovered who is independent enough to possess original and patriotic ideas. You are an American of position and yet not an ape, so you must be a connecting link between us and the more highly developed societies of Europe."

"I think that your conclusions are somewhat erroneous," she replied. "I admit that the society that you describe is typical of the descent of man, but not in a Darwinian sense. It marks a descension from the higher plane reached by the vigorous pioneers who planted and reared our social tree. The leaves toward the East, which have breathed the fetid air of Europe, have shriveled and decayed, but toward the West they are still kept green

and vigorous by the pure, native breezes. Some people seem to admire the varied brilliancy of the fading foliage, but I enjoy the vivid native color."

"*Aut Americanus aut nullus* should be your motto," he replied.

"Could I have a better?"

"You might say *l'Americaine c'est moi.* No one of your sex and surroundings would dispute the pretension."

"You compliment me, but not my sex. Millions of my country-women would compete for that distinction."

"My observations have been confined to society in its restricted sense; I am not, I acknowledge, the mouth-piece of the rabble."

"Since you admit your ability to act as society's mouth-piece, how do you define society?"

"Society is a limited liability company engaged in the production of snobs. Formerly its shares were non-transferable, but financial straits necessitated the placing of the common stock upon the open market; the preferred stock, however, is still held by the heirs of the original incorporators. The Anglo-Saxon

company has its head office in London, with agencies in the various cities of the United Kingdom, America, and the Colonies; Albert Edward Guelph, Esq., is chairman of the executive committee, and the most refined products of the corporation are sealed and labeled by his own hand. There are two distinct stages in the process of manufacture, called respectively toadying and snubbing, which must be successfully undergone before the perfected article is obtained. For instance, raw material is gathered at an American agency and after passing through the first toady stages it is put through the more intricate process of snubbing; then at a certain stage of maturity it is sent to the London office to be again subjected to a more refined toady process. Unfortunately the American material, being supplied by purchasers of the common stock, can never reach a more refined stage, so, after receiving the toady *cachet* of the chairman, it goes back to America again where it is put upon the market as a superior imported article."

"Then I am to infer, Mr. Grahame," Florence replied sarcastically, "that an American

is doomed always to remain a toady, and can never hope to attain the distinction of being a full-fledged snob. I do not think your prospectus is sufficiently attractive to induce me to purchase stock, at least, not until the native industry is sufficiently thriving to manufacture the higher grades at home and exclude the foreign brands from our market." Then she left him abruptly and walked toward a group of girls who were discussing the coming "Patricians'" ball.

When a man of Duncan's nature receives a rebuff, he is amused or angered, but not humiliated. Duncan regarded Florence's patriotism as a mere pose, and her dislike of him he considered amusing; so when she thus coolly left him, he merely laughed and turned away without being in the slightest degree offended. As for Florence, she felt in no mood for conversation, and had taken the first opportunity to rid herself of a person whom she considered actually displeasing. Duncan, feeling it was expedient to smooth the feathers he had purposely rumpled, approached Marion, and, assuming a penitent air, he sat down beside her and said with

mock humility: "Am I not to be permitted to address you at all; does your hatred extend that far?"

"You haven't tried," said Marion, her resentment increasing.

"How could I?" replied Duncan. "You seemed so engrossed by that young collegian's charms, that you could scarcely expect me, whom you avow to be an enemy, to increase your wrath by interrupting."

"I think you were mistaken," answered Marion. "You said you intended to make me your friend even against my will. There was no avowed enmity on my part; I merely considered your method of procedure somewhat eccentric."

"Indeed! In what way, may I ask?"

"It was you who challenged. Do you expect a victory without an engagement?"

"Those were the tactics the Russians used against Napoleon."

"Coldness was their chief weapon," Marion replied, "and you certainly are well armed with it."

"You forget the fire at Russia's heart."

"Was it not the fire of hate?" she asked.

"No," he said. "The fire of the heart is love, and hate is but its ashes." His voice had softened as he spoke, and Marion felt that his eyes were scanning her thoughts; she turned her head away, but her eyes were drawn slowly back until they for a moment met his glance. The knowledge that anyone could so influence her frightened her; but it was a fascinating fear which tempted investigation. She was about to reply when she became conscious of the presence of others; they were departing guests, who announced a breaking up of the party, and Marion was obliged to exchange conventional civilities with her friends until the room was slowly emptied. Harold had hurried away alone, without even a word with Florence. The poor fellow had not the heart to speak to her again that night, and he felt that she would understand the reason for his rudeness. Duncan was thus left to his own resources, and, seeing that Roswell Sanderson and Florence had gone into the library, and that all the guests had departed, he made the conventional move to leave.

"Don't hurry," said Marion, "it is only

eleven o'clock, and you see I am left quite alone."

"I will remain," replied Duncan, as he took a seat beside her on a dainty *Louis Seize* sofa, "because I have a favor to ask."

"A favor of an enemy," said Marion, with an air of astonishment.

"Yes," he answered. "Like the Spartans I cannot fight when the omens are unpropitious, so I wish to beg the favor of a truce and to ask that during it the hostiles may dance the Patricians' cotillon together."

"A dance of hostiles would be a war dance, would it not?"

"War is a cruel word," he replied. "To me the dance is symbolic of the highest sentiment."

"That is religion, is it not?" she asked, laughingly.

"No; a higher sentiment than religion is love."

"Of that there are many kinds."

"There is but one kind," he answered. "Other feelings may receive that name, but they are base alloys of the pure sentiment."

"And what is this perfect love of which you seem to know so much?"

"It is the irresistible union of two similar natures."

"Why irresistible?" Marion asked.

"Because all organism is a union of limitless atoms, which are brought together out of chaos by the attraction of similarity."

"That is a novel theory, but what has it to do with love?" she questioned.

"Love is the idealization of that theory. Man and woman are the most perfect blending of the atoms, and love is the transcendent union of their two natures."

"And is there no creator?" Marion asked.

"None but love. Love is the symbolism of the creative power; love is God."

Marion laughed; his theory was too absurd to be taken seriously, but somehow it pleased her. "Have you felt this irresistible love power?" she asked.

"I must first find my affinity," he replied evasively.

"Have you not met her yet?" said Marion, looking up with an air of astonishment.

Duncan's eyes quickly caught her glance. "I think I have," he replied in a way that was at once bold, insinuating, and tender. Marion

turned her head away quickly and a tinge of color came into her cheeks. It was resentment, but somehow a sense of pleasure tingled amid the anger. "You are an enigma," she said, ashamed at having colored. "I thought you were a cynical speculator, but now you seem a fanciful dreamer."

"You must guess again," he replied. "I am neither a cynic nor a visionist."

"What are you?" she asked abruptly.

"I am a disciple of love," he replied.

"Then I was right in calling you a dreamer, for love itself is a fantasm inspired by hope or memory."

"You are a Philistine," he said softly. "Some day you may feel, and that is to believe."

"*Che sarà sarà*, but I have my doubts," she replied. Duncan's glance was contradictory, but he did not reply. After a moment of silence he rose to leave. "Is the truce to be granted?" he said. "Do we dance together?"

"Yes, if you wish it so," replied Marion.

"Then to-morrow we meet at the ball. Remember hostilities have ceased. Good-

night." Marion extended her hand and Duncan held it for a moment. "Don't let the hate grow too strong," he said pleadingly.

"It couldn't," she replied; then she quickly withdrew her hand and turned away.

When Duncan reached the street he stopped to light a cigar. As he threw the match away and returned his match-safe to his pocket, he carelessly soliloquized: "When a moth sees a fire, it flutters around it to see what it is like, and it hasn't sense enough to keep from getting burned. A woman is much the same: excite her curiosity by the flame called love, and it is ten to one she gets singed before she finds out what it is. I have been talking a lot of trash, but it's all in the trade. Talk sense to a woman and treat her decently, and she thinks you are a muff; talk enigmatical bosh, and knock her about, and she loves you. They are all alike. No, by Jove! they are not; Helen Osgood outclasses them all, and she has 'hands for any sort'. Oh, well, as the Frenchman says: 'if you haven't got what you love, love what you have.' The Sanderson is a good looker, and you must have sport, Duncan, old man." Then shov-

ing his stick under his arm, and plunging his hands into his coat pockets, he started off at a swinging pace in search of a cab.

Marion had remained seated where she and Duncan had been together. She had listened to hear the door close behind him, and then, her face resting in both hands, she sat thinking. Her imagination rapidly created a visionary structure of dazzling possibilities, but the dismal silence which follows in the steps of revelry came, and with it unrest. Quickly her Spanish castle crumbled and faded to a lonely ruin. "It is always so," she thought; "it is always so. Like children at a pantomime, who picture to their minds brilliant jewels in the fairy queen's tiara, and learn in after life that they were tawdry counterfeits, we imagine ideal gems of possibility only to find the reality of life papier maché and paint. Is love also a tinsel that tarnishes at the touch? So far mine has been so. But might it not be different? Yes, but the thought is wicked." Marion looked hurriedly about her as though fearful that someone might have seen the thought which crept into her mind. "He believes in love," she continued. "He

says the right one exists. I wonder if it is true."

Florence came into the room to say good-night. Marion usually enjoyed repeating her day's experiences, and discussing her impressions with her friend, and Florence knew that at such times she was expected to approve of every sentiment, or be called unsympathetic, but when Florence kissed her good-night Marion made no suggestion about talking over experiences, and as neither woman felt inclined for an exchange of confidences, Florence hurried away to her room. Marion's eyes followed her as she left. "She acts strangely," she thought; "I wonder if her friendship could change? Perhaps, for we are so different. No one understands me," she sighed after a moment. "If I only had someone I could trust and love." A man stood in the doorway behind her. He heard the sigh, and he remained for a moment silently thinking of the time when she had promised to be his wife. Then he had drawn a hopeful picture of the future, a picture full of brightness and sunshine, with a loving wife for the central figure and happy, romping children play-

ing about her. That dream had flashed like a brilliant light which blazes for a moment and dies as suddenly away, leaving black, charred ashes to mark its place.

"Marion," he said gently.

She looked up startled. "Is it only you?" she said, with just a tone of disappointment in her voice.

"Yes, it is only I," he answered. "Shall I ring to have the lights turned out?"

"O, I suppose so," she sighed.

A servant came to secure the house for the night. When he appeared, Marion slowly followed her husband upstairs, and as they passed Florence's room, she saw a light burning. Usually Marion would have gone in to talk, but this time she went on to her own apartment.

Long after Marion had passed that light continued to burn. With her dress loosened and her soft brown hair falling over her white shoulders Florence sat before the fire thinking. Between her hands was a picture. It was Harold's, and as she gazed at the face she seemed to hear the words: "Florence, I love you; if you were not my dearest friend, you

might love me too." "Why did he say it; why did he say it," she murmured. Then moments from her childhood came softly back to her mind, and she saw Harold, her old-time playmate, grow to manhood. "Playmate, friend," she thought. "Why not more? Why not?" she repeated.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PATRICIANS.

Perhaps the only city of considerable proportions in which the rigorous proprieties of a New England village exist side by side with the gorgeous trappings of metropolitanism is Chicago. Its growth has been so marvelous that in a single generation the simple garb of provincialism has been exchanged for the more imposing mantle of a great city. Streets and boulevards have spread forth like the countless antennæ of some mighty monster; gigantic structures have arisen almost as at the touch of magic, and ten thousand lanky chimneys have begun to belch forth black and sooty smoke, all within the memory even of the middle-aged inhabitant. Fifty years ago Chicago was a frontier town; twenty years ago a fearful scourge laid her in ruins; to-day she stands among the first ten of the world's great cities. Countless forces have in a score of years heaped up a mighty metropolis, and, perhaps,

it is not surprising to find almost buried beneath this gigantic pile the simple and pure society of the early days.

During all these rapid changes the older families have altered little. They have built more pretentious homes, they drive more modern equipages, they eat more elaborate dinners, but even these innovations have been reluctantly received, and the hearts of the old residents have remained untouched by *fin de siécle* looseness and cynicism. In no older city are the social lines more strictly drawn, and year after year the same faces appear at the select gatherings, unconscious of the rapid change about them. Of millionaires there are many, but the foundations of their fortunes were laid in the early days of pioneering, and if occasionally a Crœsus of recent growth creeps partly in, the shoulders turned toward him are cold, and his golden key never quite unlocks the inner doors. Chicago has perhaps suffered unduly at the hands of cursory and captious critics, but its society should not be judged by a hastily written paragraph or the clanking chains of the parvenu's carriage. Whatever be its faults, and they are doubtless

many, it is thoroughly American, and slow to accept the lax scepticism and hollow manners of the older world. It is still too young to be the home of art and letters, and still too sensible to breed idlers. Happy city, if its society could continue as it is, unaffected, progressive, and moral; but the naturalness of Chicago cannot endure forever; already Puritan simplicity has fought the first skirmish with bare-necked folly and been worsted. French dresses and English drags have come to stay; insincerity and disbelief will follow.

The best society is hard to define,—especially in America,—but by some indescribable process people are shaken up, and so sifted into cliques and circles that they become mysteriously classified and labeled without the scrutinizing care of a satin-coated Lord Chamberlain. When the inhabitants of Chicago were passed through the social sieve, the finest particles formed a little heap labeled "The Patricians." This was the set that gave the most exclusive subscription dances, and, though there were other organizations which might feel strong enough to compete with this select assembly, it was noticed that the name of no

Patrician was ever found upon another list, and no outsider ever declined to become a Patrician subscriber. There is a classic story which says that when, after their victory at Salamis, the generals of the various Greek states voted the prizes for distinguished merit, each assigned the first place of excellence to himself, but they all concurred in giving their second votes to Themistocles. Were the Chicagoans called upon to vote for the most exclusive organization of their city, each would probably cast his first vote for the one of which he is a member, but the second votes would all be given to the "Patricians." It was an ancient organization, dating from before the fire, and its membership list had been sacredly guarded ever since. Simple and informal at first, it had gradually assumed pretentious proportions, until it had passed from a North Side hall, cold suppers, lemonade and nine o'clock, to the Hotel Mazarin, terrapin, *brut* champagne, and eleven o'clock. In the early days there had been three fiddlers and a man to call off, but now there was an orchestra, a Hungarian band and a cotillon: "*O tempora, O mores!*" "*Imitatores, servum pecus.*"

Marion Sanderson was a patroness of the "Patricians," and to her efforts the innovations were, in a great measure, due. They had been coldly received at first, and when the changes culminated in champagne, some of the stricter members withdrew their names and refused permission to their daughters to attend, but the foundations of the Patricians had been too firmly laid to be shattered even by such defection.

Three evenings after the events of the last chapter the inviting French ball-room of the Hotel Mazarin was lighted for the first "Patricians'" dance of the season. The florist had arranged his last cluster, and the floor had received its last polishing; the dainty canary draperies were coquettishly caught up with garlands of flowers, while here and there slender palms cast their graceful shadows upon the shining floor, and white and gold woodwork peeped from behind smilax and roses. A row of waiting chairs around the room seemed to add to the stillness, which was broken only by the hollow, echoing steps of two managers who were taking a final glance at the preparations. Soon a jabbering of Ger-

man, and the squeak of violins behind the gallery palms, announced the arrival of the orchestra, while down-stairs by the supper rooms the twang of a Hungarian cymballo proclaimed the presence of the Tzigan band. Chattering Frenchmen were scurrying about the tables putting on the finishing touches, and the usually suave and smirking *maître d'hôtel* was scolding an unfortunate "omnibus" hurrying upstairs with the punch glasses. "*Dépêche toi, Gustave, ces gens vont venir à l' instant*" he cried; but though an hour had passed since the time for which the guests were invited, the ball-room remained deserted.

Down-stairs a solitary woman sat quaking in the ladies' dressing-room, and her husband braved the patronizing glances of the servants in the hall. They were from a Western town, and both were wondering what nine o'clock on the invitation meant. For nearly another hour they sat there, and then the rustling of a satin dress announced the arrival of a patroness who had promised to come early to receive. Soon a few men straggled in, another patroness arrived, and finally a little knot of women who had collected in the dressing-

room mustered sufficient courage to enter the great, empty ball-room. The orchestra struck up a Viennese waltz, a couple started to dance, and a few others followed their example. The fashionable hour had arrived; men, maidens and matrons crowded in, the room became quickly filled with a talking, laughing multitude; brilliant colors and bright smiles dispelled the gloom, and a giddy whirling mass of tulle and cheviot announced that the ball had opened.

Marion Sanderson was among the late arrivals. She had been unusually long at her toilette, but the time had been profitably spent, for when she entered the room her perfectly fitting gown of yellow satin and old lace produced an envious murmur among the women. Marion looked well at any time, but she was especially attractive in evening dress, for the lights and excitement seemed to produce an extra glow of beauty which few failed to notice. When she came, it was at the close of a dance, and a knot of men quickly formed around her, but Duncan was not of the number. She had expected to find him looking for her, and when she saw him near

her, talking to her enemy, Mrs. McSeeney, she felt an unpleasant tinge of jealousy. After the excitement her entrance created had subsided, he came slowly toward her.

"I believe I have to thank you, Mr. Grahame," she said, giving him her hand, "for these beautiful yellow roses."

"On the contrary, it is I who must thank you for carrying them," he replied. "Besides, they are typical of jealousy."

"Jealousy," repeated Marion in a wondering tone. "Were you ever jealous?"

"A lover is always jealous," Duncan replied. Then he added gently: "I am a lover."

"Then all the world must love you," she said laughingly.

"I wish it did, for you are in the world," he answered.

A glance of reproof was her only reply, for Walter Sedger came to claim a dance, and she had just time to promise the next but one to Duncan before she was whirled away into the gliding throng. Duncan's eyes followed her for a moment; she saw his glance and a slight tinge of color came into her cheek. In a moment she was lost amid the

dancers. Mechanically she danced a waltz and a polka, scarcely noticing her partner's remarks, for in her heart she felt a strange apprehension that she could not understand. There was a fascination in Duncan's personality she dared not attempt to explain.

When the first strains of Duncan's dance began, he came to her immediately, and, without speaking, quietly took her hand and placed his arm gently about her waist; then, catching the time of the music, they glided away into a dreamy waltz. It was their first dance together, and as he guided her gracefully and easily through the whirling maze of waltzers, Marion felt that she had never really danced before. Silently they waltzed awhile, enjoying the delicious excitement of the movement, then he said softly: "I have never understood the power of the dance before, but to-night our steps, gliding together to this glorious music, seem to me like the love of two natures, who feel and act in perfect unison."

Marion looked up silently until her eyes met his glance; she grew icy cold, but she could feel the quick throb of each pulse beat. Duncan pressed her gently nearer, but she

drew back and tossed her head forcibly away. She laughed a hollow little laugh at the fear in her heart, for here at least she was mistress of herself. Rhythmically their steps moved on to the enchanting music. Marion closed her eyes and tried to shut out the thoughts in her heart. In the darkness she seemed to be carried softly on through space, like some spirit borne away in the arms of dreamy happiness. Duncan drew her closer to his side; she felt a delicious sense of joy, such as she had never known before, and, almost dizzy, she glided on over the shining floor, her heart beating with wild, delightful pleasure. The music stopped. For a moment they danced on, but the dream had faded; she was back in the noisy, humming world of people.

Marion had arrived so late that people were already flocking toward the supper table. She had long before promised to take supper with Walter Sedger, who was to lead the cotillon; but when he appeared, she suggested that as Duncan was alone he had better join them. So the three wandered down-stairs and entered the supper-room. The weird Hungarian *Czardas* was being played by the Tzigans in the

hallway, and it seemed to Marion that it did not harmonize with the clattering plates and the laughter. She had once heard that fantastic melody in Buda, and then it created strange sensations of unrest and aroused the wildest feelings of her nature. In her present state of mind she felt thankful for the noisy rattle of the supper-room.

The tables were placed in a large, oblong room, and were arranged for parties of four or six, but Marion, being a patroness, was conducted to a large, round table at the farther end, reserved for the managers and their friends. She hoped that the presence of other people would spare her the necessity of talking much, but at first she was obliged to manufacture conversation, in order to keep her two companions amused. Duncan made no attempt to conceal the fact that the presence of Sedger was distasteful to him, and he amused himself by delivering occasional satirical remarks upon the latter's conversation which did not tend to improve the relations between the two men. Accidentally, however, both Duncan and Sedger were drawn into the general talk of the table, and Marion was left

to herself. She felt lonesome, in spite of the gaiety around her, and realized that there is no loneliness so deep as that which comes amid merriment one cannot join. She looked about at the pretty faces and the brilliant colors made brighter by the lights; she saw the sparkling eyes and glittering diamonds, she heard merry laughter mingling with the rattling dishes and scurrying feet, but all seemed hollow and far away. She knew that she had just been brought under the influence of an unknown power, and she was faintly endeavoring to collect her senses and understand herself. Almost unwarned she had felt impetuous love flash forth in her heart, and now, in a dazed sort of way, she was trying to bring her mind to act. She was impressionable and reckless, but not so reckless as quite to forget her position. One thought grew strongest in her mind; it was fear. She was brought back to her surroundings by a remark addressed to her by Mrs. McSeeney: "You look quite pale, my dear, are you ill?"

"Not in the least," replied Marion, smiling faintly, "but this room seems close. Don't you think so?"

"I had not noticed it," was the answer spoken equivocally.

The supper was somehow worried through. As they were leaving the table Walter Sedger said: "I have saved the seats of head couple for you, Mrs. Sanderson; if you will come with me, I will show them to you. I lead alone, but I hope you will permit me to take you out for an occasional extra turn."

"I shall be delighted," Marion replied. Sedger gave her his arm, and Duncan, glowering more than ever, was obliged to wander on behind.

The musicians' gallery did not project into the ball-room, but was supported by columns in the hall outside. Just under it an attractive nook had been arranged, with palms and foliage plants, a rug and a divan. The lights were kept low and the palms were so thickly placed as almost to conceal the people who might chance to sit there. At each side of this recess was a door leading into the ball-room, and as Marion and her two companions were passing through the one at the right, they met Florence Moreland and Roswell Sanderson coming out.

"I am looking for my fan, Mr. Grahame," said Florence, stopping. "Don't you want to help me search for it?"

"Of course I do, and I'll wager I find it," said Duncan, walking directly toward the nook just described.

"You need not express your disapproval of me so pointedly," called Florence, protestingly. "I assure you it is not in here," she continued, following him until they were both concealed by the palms.

"A thousand pardons for my blunder," replied Duncan. "I thought I saw you coming out of here after one of the dances with Dr. Maccanfrae."

"I see I must confess my guilt," answered Florence, smiling; "but I relied on the protection of his grey hairs."

"I gather you don't approve of this corner," replied Duncan. "At least," he continued, looking around, "you were not so indiscreet as to leave your fan here."

"I suppose the place has its uses," she answered laughingly, "at least the managers think so, if one is to judge by the care bestowed on its arrangement."

"If I were bold," Duncan said, as they passed out, "I would say that it is like a fire escape, only to be used on pressing occasions."

Florence frowned at this atrocious punning, and he added, meekly: "May I have permission to admire your gown?"

"I am surprised that you like it," she replied. "This is its second season."

"I think it is charming," he continued. "But might I inquire if it is ardent affection for each other which prompts you and Mrs. Sanderson to select the same color to-night?"

"It was not a case of affection, but quite an accident," Florence replied. "In fact, when Marion saw me coming down-stairs arrayed so like herself, she wanted to make me change my gown, but it was so late that I refused."

They reached the ball-room door, and there they met Roswell Sanderson with the lost fan, which he had found in the supper-room. Duncan left Florence with Marion's husband and went in search of his partner. He found Marion already in her place for the cotillon and took his seat beside her. A double row of chairs had been arranged around the room, and poor Walter Sedger was flying about try-

ing to make people take their places, so that he might commence his first figure. The one occasion when all intelligence seems to desert the average mortal,—especially if he be a man,—is when he is called upon to dance in a cotillon, and already the leader's difficulties had commenced. When Sedger had succeeded in seating a group in one place, he would turn around and find that people whom he had fairly implored to take their places were wandering across the room, or that others, who were seated in the back row, were having angry controversies with people who had placed their chairs in front of them. All expected Sedger to find them seats, and all insisted upon being in the front row; as there were some eighty couples to dance, and only forty could sit in front, this, to an intelligent mind, would seem an impossible proposition; but not a single one of those one hundred and sixty people seemed to understand it. Finally poor Sedger conceived the brilliant idea of starting the music, and the people who were squabbling over places, fearing they might be left out altogether, scrambled recklessly after seats, and thus the floor was

cleared. Sedger was now master of the situation, and soon he was leading a troup of sprawling men through a maze of pretty gowns, in the performance of the intricate evolutions of a cotillon figure.

Duncan, instead of favoring someone, had persuaded Marion to dance the figure through with him. The band played a fantastic polka, and, catching the exciting inspiration of the Hungarian strains, they glided fleetly over the slippery floor. It was no longer the dreamy waltz, but the wild abandon of rapid motion, and as they danced Marion seemed carried away by the exhilarating movement. On, on, they danced, until the music stopped; then Duncan led her quickly out of the ball-room to the nook under the musicians' gallery, where, breathless from the exercise, she sank down on the divan. Duncan, seating himself beside her, rested his arm upon one of the cushions, and leaned forward so that he could see her face. Her cheeks glowed from the exercise, and there, in the soft light, her large black eyes glistening with excitement, she seemed to Duncan the most glorious creature he had ever seen. Delighted he gazed until

Marion raised her eyes and met his eager glance.

"Why did you bring me here?" she asked.

"To say good-by."

"What do you mean?" she said, with a frightened tone in her voice.

"I mean that I leave to-morrow. I have been called back to the East."

"Are you glad?" she asked sadly.

"Yes, I am glad," he replied softly; "glad to have known you, glad to feel that you exist."

Wild thoughts flashed impetuously through her mind. "Why?" she asked.

He leaned forward till his face was near hers, and she could see his grey eyes, now black in the dim light, almost next her own. He took her hand and held it; then he whispered passionately: "Because I love you."

"For the sake of both of us, don't say that," she said hoarsely, drawing back her hand.

"For the sake of both of us I will," he replied. "What is there to prevent our loving?"

"My husband," she said, and the words brought back fear to her heart.

"I thought you were a woman of the world," he replied scornfully. "Do you mean to tell me that you are afraid?"

"Yes," said Marion resolutely.

"Then you must drown your fear in love," he answered, drawing his arm about her shoulders.

"You must leave me," she pleaded, trying to release herself.

"Not until you say you love me," was his answer.

"That I do not hate you ought to tell you that; O, I can't say any more. Leave me, I entreat you."

"I will not leave you, my Marion," he replied impetuously. "I must have your love." And he leaned forward and kissed her. A dress rustled behind the palms. Duncan heard it and quickly released Marion, who darted away and ran toward the ball-room; and Duncan, glancing anxiously through the foliage, saw a crimson gown hurrying through the other door. "Confound my luck!" he muttered. "I thought I knew something about this sort of thing, but I was a fool to take such chances."

Inside the ball-room Marion found her husband, standing among a group of men, watching the dancing. "I am going home, Roswell," she said, taking his arm and drawing him away. "Find Florence, won't you?"

"Yes, dear," he replied. "Are you ill?" he added, thinking it unusual for his wife to leave so early.

"I feel tired, that is all. Tell Florence she can go home with Mrs. Smythe if she chooses."

Roswell Sanderson went in search of Florence and soon returned with her. He had given her Marion's message, but Florence did not care to remain, so she excused herself to her partner in the cotillon and hurried away with Roswell. "What is the matter?" she anxiously asked Marion.

"I feel a little faint and I think I will go home," was the answer. Florence thought Marion seemed agitated rather than faint. She wondered what had happened, but thinking it unwise to pursue the matter further, she walked on quietly beside Marion and her husband. On the stairs they met Duncan; Marion tried to avoid him, but he came

toward her and said calmly: "I have been looking everywhere for you, Mrs. Sanderson. Have you forgotten you have a partner in the cotillon?"

"No;" Marion replied. "But you must excuse me as I feel quite tired; I am going home."

"I feel cheated," answered Duncan; "the more so as I leave to-morrow and must say good-by, now." He put out his hand and Marion took it. She tried not to look at him, but an indefinable attraction compelled her to raise her eyes. "Good-by," he said, softly pressing her hand.

"Good-by," she answered. Then she quickly drew back her hand and turned away. As she descended the stairs she felt that he was still looking at her. She wanted to look back, but she closed her eyes and pressed closely to her husband's arm till they reached the cloak-room door. While she and Florence were putting on their wraps, she could hear the distant strains of music coming from the ball-room; they seemed to her like the last echo of the love which had flamed so brilliantly for a moment in her heart, and

now must die and become a memory. The music stopped. "It is all over," she thought; then she hurried away with Florence and her husband down the great stairway to the street door. "Mrs. Sanderson's carriage," called a servant on the stairs. "Mrs. Sanderson's carriage," was echoed from the street. She heard a rumbling noise of wheels; then the street door opened, and she felt a blast of cold, refreshing air. "The carriage is here, ma'am," called her footman, and they passed out into the darkness. At the end of the awning-covered passage the carriage lamps burned dimly, and she could hear the restless champing of bits. They reached the carriage and took their places; the door was closed; the servant mounted the box, the carriage rolled away crunching the crisp snow under its wheels. Marion sank into a corner and tried to think. "I did my best," she said to herself again and again. "I did my best, but it was so hard." Over the snow-muffled stones the carriage rolled past massive structures, black and silent in the darkness. Huge, scowling ogres, they seemed to Marion, coldly frowning their displeasure. On through the

darkened streets they went and over the river bridge; she could see the flickering street lamps faintly glistening on the ice, and she thought they were feeble hope rays shining through the darkness. Marion closed her eyes and listened to the wheels creaking through the snow. How long it was she did not know, but after a time she felt a sense of stillness. She opened her eyes. They were home.

CHAPTER VIII.

GATHERING CLOUDS.

"Are you going to the 'Renaissance Club' tea, Marion, dear?" said Florence Moreland, coming into the library on the afternoon following the "Patricians'" ball. Marion was sitting on the low front window seat, and she held a sash curtain crumpled in her hand. Her eyes were slowly following the numerous sleighs gliding up and down the Lake Shore Drive. The sun shone brightly on the glistening snow, the bells jingled merrily, and the waving plumes of graceful sleighs combined, with the rosy faces of their fur-clad occupants, to form a cheery winter picture. But with all this brightness before her Marion looked thoughtful and disturbed. Perhaps the restless lake beyond, dashing its troubled waves against the grey sea wall, better expressed the thoughts which caused the discontented wandering of her eyes. She did not reply to Florence's question but continued looking out

over the road-way, as though unaware of her friend's presence.

"Marion, dear," called Florence in a louder tone; "didn't you hear me?"

Mrs. Sanderson slowly dropped the sash curtain and looked up. "O, are you there?" she said vaguely.

"Yes, and I have been here an age trying to make you hear me," Florence replied. "What are you dreaming about?"

"O, nothing much," Marion sighed; but her voice told her friend that this was not quite true.

"You are in one of your moods again," said Florence. "You need me to cheer you up; but first of all tell me if you are going to the tea this afternoon?"

"O, I fancy so," Marion replied somewhat mournfully. "I wish the 'Renaissance Club' were in Kamtschatka, or some other such place, but Roswell actually promised to come home in time to take us, so I suppose we shall have to go. It is not time yet, though."

"I know it," said Florence, "but I think I had better change my gown now."

"You look well enough as you are," Marion

replied, casting her eyes critically over her friend's attire. "Put on your gold-braided jacket and you will look as smart as any girl there."

"Very well, then I shall go as I am. I would much rather talk than bother about dressing." Saying this Florence approached Marion and sat down beside her on the window seat. Marion did not notice her, but continued to look thoughtfully out of the window. Florence watched her for a moment, as though trying to read the thoughts behind her restless eyes; then she gently took both her friend's hands, and holding them in her own said inquiringly: "What is troubling you, dear."

"Nothing," Marion sighed.

"Then why do you seem so far away?"

"Because I was thinking."

"Of what?" asked Florence.

"Of how like a human life the waters of that lake are."

"I don't understand," said her friend.

"Why, like a life they roll waywardly on until they pass to mother earth again, or are borne upward to the clouds. Sometimes they

lie peacefully at rest, or they ripple merrily like children at play, only to be rudely awakened and lashed to angry fury in an aimless struggle with the winds. Like a life they are merely the agents of some greater power, helplessly following their destiny."

"I think you theorize too much, my dear," said Florence. "If you want happiness, you must take life as it comes."

"Happiness," laughed Marion cynically. "Happiness is like the golden bowl at the rainbow's base; no matter how desperately you chase after it, it still glitters in the distant future."

"Possibly," replied Florence, "though I remember reading somewhere that 'the reason there is so little happiness in the world is because so few people are engaged in producing it.' Perhaps that is why we are unhappy."

"Do you know the formula for the production of this rarity?" sneered Marion.

"No, but I suppose it has something to do with the time honored saying, 'be virtuous,' and so forth."

"Yes, I know; the kind of happiness that comes from the knowledge that one is good,"

put in Marion. "It is a sort of self-satisfied, touch-me-not happiness, with a better-than-you-are smirk about it."

"Can't one have a clear conscience without being a Pharisee?" asked Florence.

"I don't know," sighed Marion. "It is all a question of temptation, I suppose. Some people seem to be good from birth; they are never tempted, and have no charity for those who are."

"I don't call such people good," replied Florence; "a St. Anthony without a temptation would be a sorry picture of virtuous self-control."

Marion did not reply. For a moment she remained quietly thinking, as though Florence's words had inspired her with an idea; finally she spoke, in slowly chosen words: "Do you think what the Bible says about a mental sin being as great as the outward act can be true?"

"I think it depends entirely upon circumstances," replied Florence.

Marion turned her eyes thoughtfully upon the floor, then, restlessly twisting a cushion tassel between her fingers, she asked earnestly:

"Do you think a woman who is tempted and resists, yet feels the subtle poison still in her heart, has sinned?"

Florence was silent a moment, as though weighing the question in her mind. "I would not condemn such a woman," she finally said; "I would pity her."

"What ought she to do?" asked Marion.

"She has kept her self-respect, and I think on that foundation she should build the negative happiness called peace of mind."

"What if the sting is too fresh, the poison too strong? What if the cup is still before her?"

"Then she should dash it resolutely from her, and trust that time will heal the wound."

Marion smiled faintly. She was thinking of an express train rushing toward the East and bearing danger farther and farther away. "Perhaps destiny is kind sometimes," she thought. "Were you ever unhappy, Florence?" she asked after a moment.

"Why, what an absurd question," her friend replied. "Is there any one who has not been unhappy at some time?"

"O, of course people have unpleasant mo-

ments which they get over," Marion answered; "but what I call unhappiness is to feel that one has made an irreparable mistake in life, and then to be suddenly shown the unattainable possibility."

"I should think such a person would feel something like a hungry pauper, gazing into a pastry cook's window. The glimpse of possibility must intensify his craving."

"You are utterly practical and entirely unsympathetic," said Marion, somewhat ruffled at Florence's levity. "Sometimes I think you are a most unsatisfactory person."

"I will not be dismissed as a person," laughed Florence. "You may call me anything you like, but don't subject me to the degradation of being styled a person."

"I think you deserve it for turning my seriousness so inconsiderately into ridicule,' said Marion with an injured air.

"It is just the best thing for you," Florence replied. "You worry unnecessarily."

"You always say that," sighed Marion, "but you don't understand."

"Yes, I do. No one understands you as well as I do."

"Then why don't you sympathize with me more?"

"You don't need sympathy; that only panders to your discontent. What you need is to be shaken up and made to forget yourself."

"You're a cruel girl."

"I know it, and I am going home to-morrow."

"Are you daft, Florence?" said Marion, amazed at her friend's abruptness.

"No, I mean it," replied Florence. "But it is not because you have treated me badly, my dear. I did not mean to tell you so suddenly, but something happened a short time ago which makes me feel I had better leave. Please don't ask me about it, dear," she continued, seeing the questioning expression in Marion's eyes. "I only feel that it will be wiser for me to go away."

"Why, Florence," said Marion sympathetically, "can't you trust me?"

"It is not because I can't trust you, my dear," she replied. "You understand me, don't you? I think it would be kinder for me not to remain, and then," she added hesitatingly,

"I want to be away where I can better think it over."

"Yes, I understand," Marion answered. "You are such a queer girl, though; how could you keep so quiet about it?"

"I didn't feel that I could talk about it. I am queer, I suppose, but you will forgive me if I go away, won't you? I have thought it over for three days and I feel it is best."

"I will forgive you, of course, my dear; but, O, Florence, do be sure you are doing right. Don't make a mistake."

"That is why I am going away. I will know better then."

At this moment a man quietly entered the room. He had delicately cut features and a determined mouth, softened by gentle, brown eyes. His dark hair was slightly tinged with grey upon the temples, and his colorless complexion indicated a man whose life was little spent in the open air, a fact somewhat emphasized by his slightly stooping shoulders and thin, nervous hands. His clothes were plain and neat, but without any of the pronounced effects of fashion, and his entire appearance was decidedly that of one who is termed in America "a business man."

"Why don't you speak when you enter a room, Roswell? said Mrs. Sanderson, looking up suddenly, startled at seeing her husband. "Did you hear what we were talking about?"

"I am not an eavesdropper, my dear," he said quietly. "I merely came to tell you that I am back from the bank. Are you ready to go to the tea?"

"I had no idea it was so late," said Marion looking at her watch. "We must hurry, Florence." The two women went to put on their hats, and when they returned all three entered the carriage waiting at the door and were driven quickly toward the rooms of the "Renaissance Club" in lower Wabash Avenue.

The institution which bore the name of "Renaissance Club" was a ladies' literary society devoted to studying the effect of humanism upon the literature of the world. It held meetings in its tastefully arranged rooms on each alternate Thursday afternoon throughout the season, and on these occasions original papers were read and discussed with an amount of erudition which astonished the members unacquainted with the usual works of reference, and rendered the club the admiration

and pride of feminine Chicago. It is true that literary ability was by no means the first requisite for admission, and that the membership list might be used with impunity for directing invitations to the smartest dances; but despite these facts, there was a decidedly literary flavor about the meetings of the club, enhanced perhaps by the presence of two or three ladies who had actually experienced the delight of seeing their writings in print. Of course the talking was confined to a confident set, who enjoyed the excitement of a literary discussion; for as no one else desired to undergo the tortures of speaking in public, the vast majority assumed a dignified expression of wisdom, and remained discreetly silent. The club had discussed Dante and Petrarch, Villani and Ariosto, even Lorenzo de Medici; it had laughed over Cervantes and blushed profusely over Boccaccio and Rabelais, but the meeting to which the Sandersons and Florence Moreland had gone was called for no such intellectual purpose. Once during the season the club gave a tea to which men were invited, and on such occasions the entertainment was confined to the efforts of elocutionists and

balladists. Whether the club dared not expose its intellectual attainments to public criticism, or did not care to have its literary efforts judged by the standard of the Board of Trade, was never sufficiently clear; but in spite of the fact that no literature was ever discussed at the annual tea, this meeting was invariably the most fully attended of any during the season.

When the Sanderson party entered there was such a hum of subdued voices, that the efforts of a young woman engaged in singing were scarcely audible above the animated whisperings of the people who thronged the club-rooms. Numerous small tea tables supplied with all manner of dainty tea things were scattered about. Each of these was presided over by a pretty girl, and each was surrounded by a knot of black-coated youths. Although young men were there in abundance, those of mature years were conspicuously absent; but it is one of the peculiarities of a busy city like Chicago, that while young employés are able to appear at afternoon gatherings, the heads of firms are invariably detained at their offices.

The balladist's song was followed by an uninterrupted flow of feminine voices, punctuated with occasional masculine laughs, coming like intermittent grumblings of thunder during a pattering storm of rain. The American girl who does not talk is a rarity, indeed, but, though climatic influences have parched her vocal cords, her harsh, hearty voice saying something is a pleasurable contrast to the subdued vacuity of the average English maiden of twenty. The animated clatter of an occidental gathering may seem discordant when compared with the solemnity of a London drawing-room; but in this artificial age it should prove refreshing to one who admits a fondness for open-hearted naturalness. There was an intimacy among the people gathered in the "Renaissance Club" rooms which is rarely met with in the larger cities. They were nearly all acquainted with one another, and most of them were people who met with such frequency that many restrictions of formality had passed away. A person whose life is continuously passed amid such surroundings may develop an inclination to magnify his own *entourage* to the disparage-

ment of the great world he knows so little of; but he will be spared a realization of the atomic nature of a person's position in that world, and he will never know the fitful interest cosmopolitan society takes in any individual.

Marion Sanderson looked upon this society as provincial, and she felt inexpressibly bored at the thought that she must meet absolutely the same people night after night, and know by premonition what each of them would have to say on any given subject. Her senses had once been dazzled by the varied glitter of the metropolitan kaleidoscope. Had she been given time to investigate the tawdry shams, of which it is so largely composed, she might have appreciated better the less brilliant world about her; but with her superficial experience inciting discontent, Marion wandered about, that afternoon, pitying the restricted resources of the people she met, and congratulating herself and her intimates upon the aid they had already rendered toward the development of Chicago society.

Florence Moreland, however, appreciated this society, which, surrounded by all the ap-

purtenances of civilization, was still so natural and sincere. She regretted that she had decided to leave, and she entered so heartily into the spirit of Western life, that she was more than once tempted to alter her decision; but, remembering that her presence seemed to torture Harold, she realized that her own peace of mind would be more easily attained in her New Hampshire home. She wandered about the room, taking leave of her many friends, who were, of course, greatly surprised at the suddenness of her departure, until she was accosted by Mrs. McSeeney. Her eyes beamed so triumphantly that Florence felt an instinctive dread of an encounter with a woman whom she knew to be Marion's enemy. Mrs. McSeeney spoke with a suavity which Florence felt to be entirely feigned, and she was at a loss to account for this sudden pleasantness of manner.

"I have just heard, my dear," said Mrs. McSeeney, "that you are going away, and I can't tell you how deeply we shall all miss you. What induced you to leave so suddenly?"

"I am called home because my father says

he must have me there," Florence replied, thinking it the easiest excuse to make. "I am the only child, and he gets extremely lonesome when I am long away."

"You forget that while he is but one person, there are many others here. You are inconsiderate of the claims of the majority," said Mrs. McSeeney. "However, you may carry away the satisfaction that you looked absolutely heavenly at the ball last night in that charming yellow gown. How like it is to Marion's, was that intentional?"

"That is the second time I have been asked that question, but I assure you it was quite an unexpected coincidence."

"A coincidence which created a fortunate contrast," replied Mrs. McSeeney, with increased suavity. "Fortunate for you, at least."

"What does this extreme agreeableness mean?" Florence wondered, and for a moment she was lost for a reply. "By the way," continued Mrs. McSeeney, "what has become of that charming Mr. Grahame whom Marion brought to my house last week? I don't see him here."

"He went back to New York to-day,"

answered Florence somewhat coolly, as she wished to end the conversation.

"What a pity!" said Mrs. McSeeney, speaking in a louder tone. "Mr. Grahame was such a delightful man, and dear Marion Sanderson must miss him so."

Instinctively feeling that some one else might have overheard this remark, Florence looked hurriedly behind her, and was horrified to see Roswell Sanderson and Harold Wainwright standing there. She saw the meaning of Mrs. McSeeney's action now; she had laid this trap to injure Marion in the eyes of her husband, and Roswell's expression of mingled anger and anxiety told her plainly that he had overheard. Frightened for Marion's happiness she turned to Mrs. McSeeney and said angrily: "You have no right to connect Marion's name with Mr. Grahame's in such a manner."

"Indeed!" Mrs. McSeeney replied with exasperating coolness. "I think that when a woman of Marion Sanderson's prominence is indiscreet in her actions, she must expect to cause comment. I happened to see Mr. Grahame kiss Mrs. Sanderson, under the musicians' gallery, at the ball last night. I think

I am justified in any conclusions I may draw."

Florence heard a low exclamation behind her. For a moment countless thoughts rushed through her brain in jumbled confusion, then she seemed to understand it all. Mrs. McSeeney told the truth. No woman would dare make such an accusation falsely, and this explained Marion's strange talk of the afternoon. Poor Marion! was there no way to save her? With the suddenness of inspiration an idea came to her. She remembered seeing a play in which two women were mistaken for each other by the similarity of their gowns; she had also been with Duncan under the musicians' gallery, and she knew it was too dark to distinguish faces accurately there. She turned quickly toward Roswell Sanderson, and seizing his hand drew him forward. He was about to speak but she stopped him; then, facing Mrs. McSeeney, she said defiantly: "You have conceived a clever plan to ruin Mr. Sanderson's wife. Your motive, I think, is evident to all who know you, but, fortunately, your statement is untrue. 'Twas I who was with Mr. Grahame under the musicians' gallery."

Mrs. McSeeney drew back astonished at this sudden statement, but she quickly recovered from her surprise and said ironically: "Such a melodramatic sacrifice seems out of place in real life, but I suppose you are one of those heroic maidens who enjoy tarnishing their own reputation to clear a friend. I admit that the darkness and the similarity of your gowns may have rendered the confusion possible, but I assure you I was not mistaken about the facts. I suppose you are prepared to admit them also?"

"I am," said Florence deliberately.

"Well, you are ingenuous, I must say," said Mrs. McSeeney, astonished at Florence's determined manner. "Perhaps you will think better of your foolishness when you realize the position in which you have placed yourself before society. In the meantime I trust Mr. Sanderson accepts a statement which, considering my experience of the world, I believe extremely improbable."

Roswell clenched his fists to suppress his anger. "Mr. Sanderson," he said slowly, "believes absolutely in the fidelity of his wife, and he warns Mrs. McSeeney that she must

answer to him for any future slurs upon her character."

Mrs. McSeeney's eyes flashed as she said coolly: "I am glad Mrs. Sanderson enjoys so absolutely the confidence of her husband." Then, shrugging her shoulders slightly, she turned and walked toward the door. It was growing so late that the distant room in which this scene occurred was quite empty, and fortunately no one but Harold Wainwright had overheard the conversation. An anxious witness of the scene, he had appeared at first dumfounded by Florence's self-accusation; but he now calmly followed Mrs. McSeeney toward the door. He quickly caught up with her, and speaking so quietly that she turned about somewhat frightened, he said: "May I speak with you a moment? I have something of importance to say."

"Certainly," she replied, and they passed on into the next room.

Florence was left alone with Roswell Sanderson. The first excitement of the resolution to save Marion had passed, and she now realized the position in which she had so suddenly placed herself, and her foremost desire

now was to get away somewhere. Above all she dared not speak to Roswell. She was still holding his hand which she had grasped so earnestly in the midst of her excitement, and now she tried to release it. This action Roswell resisted, and, turning until he could see into her face, he said earnestly: "You are a brave girl, Florence, and I thank you for it from the bottom of my heart."

Florence lowered her eyes. "Don't talk about it," she said anxiously, "and please promise not to say one word to Marion of all this. I am going away, and, if you can keep her from knowing about it, it will make me so happy."

Roswell was silent a moment. A curious expression of sad determination, which Florence did not understand, came into his eyes.

"I promise," he finally said, "but you must answer me one question now that we are alone. Did you speak the truth?"

Florence trembled slightly. She had been expecting this question and felt that everything depended on her answer. She pressed his hand firmly, and, looking up into his face, said in tones which bore the resolute accent

of truth: "Roswell, I assure you that Marion has been true to you."

"I will ask no more," he replied, and she saw that determined expression come back again to his eyes. They heard the sound of approaching steps, and he quickly released her hand. Turning round they saw Marion approaching. "What under heaven are you doing here?" Marion said, as she entered the room. "Don't you know everyone has gone home, and we shall be late for dinner?"

CHAPTER IX.

OAKHURST.

On a Saturday morning in early June, about five months after Duncan's visit to Chicago, Rennsler Van Vort, attired in tweeds and carrying a bag in one hand and a bundle of coats and sticks in the other, pushed rapidly past the ticket collector of a Jersey City ferry. He was on his way to spend Sunday with the Osgoods at their place near Morristown, and his haste was inspired by the knowledge that if he missed the next boat he would be left to wander about the most unattractive portion of New York for at least another half-hour. He managed, however, to reach the ferry-boat just before she started, and was congratulating himself on his good fortune, when he observed a man with a bag in each hand, running in hot haste down the incline leading to the boat. The iron gates were closed; the windlasses were clicking rapidly as the mooring hawsers were being wound

around, and the great paddle wheels had begun to stir the waters of the slip to seething foam. The man at the windlass tried to restrain the tardy passenger's efforts to reach the boat, but he brushed past him and leapt onto her deck, just as she had begun to move out from the slip.

"Great Scot! Duncan, did you drop from the clouds?" said Van Vort, as the breathless runner, aided by a deck hand, clambered over the iron gate.

"No, I beat the gate-keeper," replied Duncan, as he came to a stop beside Rennsler and deposited his bags on the deck. "He was just shutting the stile, and called to me to stop, but I didn't care to bask on the docks for an hour, so I gave him the slip and here I am."

"That explains your flying leap on the boat, but did you jump across the pond also?" asked Van Vort. "The last time I saw you, you were going to Chicago; then I heard you were in London, and now you make an amazing appearance on a Jersey ferry. You must have taken up jugglery, old chap."

"An old loafer like you doesn't know any-

thing about business; if you did you might appreciate my flights."

"Never mind if I don't," answered Van Vort, resting his arm on the rail and gazing into the water as it surged under the paddle wheels. "Tell me what took you to London and what brought you back."

"Well, I went to Chicago, as you know," answered Duncan, "to look after an elevator syndicate. I was there a week, got things straightened up, took the 'Limited' on Thursday, reached New York Friday night, spent Saturday morning at the office, and sailed that afternoon, on the Umbria, to look after the London end of the scheme."

"That was last January. How have you been eluding your friends ever since?"

"I was in London until two weeks ago. I came in on the Etruria this morning; we should have landed Sunday, but we broke our shaft and had to be towed in."

"Well, Duncan, I am glad to see you back; but you must give an account of yourself. What did you do in London besides business?"

"During February and March I was groping about in the fog after Britons to invest in

Chicago elevators, or following the hounds in the Shires. London in winter is the beastliest place in Christendom, and when I could get away I was in the country."

"Yes; I know London in the winter," put in Van Vort. "Fogs and suffocation, rain and muddy boots, slush and colds, sleet and influenza, all combine to make a dreary mackintosh and umbrella existence, which you can vary in-doors by shivering before fires that won't burn."

"I see you've been there," answered Duncan; "but you want to add something about empty theatres and clubs, and say it is a city deserted by every person who can buy, borrow, or steal a railway ticket to the country. But for one guardian angel, I should not be here to tell this tale."

"I can name that angel," said Van Vort; "it is Scotch whiskey."

"Right!" answered Duncan.

"I thought so. All sufferers seek the same cure; but April and May were better, weren't they?"

"I should think so."

"Did you meet many people?"

"Plenty. I fell in with Lady Brock on the steamer, and she came in handy. I knew some people when I was there before, and took out some good letters; and then there is the American colony."

"Yes, the American colony," said Van Vort; "who are they?"

"Some of them are people one doesn't know at home, but the English don't mind that, so why should we? You remember Mrs. Raynor, that pretty woman who used to be about New York, and afterward so scandalized the prudes by an affair with a Russian Grand Duke that no one received her when she came home?"

"Of course; did you run across her?"

"Yes; she is in London now, the smartest of the smart; the friend of the prince and the envy of American turf hunters. They wouldn't have her in New York, but now they flock to her house because she is in the London smart set, and she is clever enough to receive them and forget the malarious past."

"I suppose you went there; the malarious past didn't frighten you away."

"Of course not. I was her right-hand man,

and used to help entertain the people at her Wednesday afternoons. Not only that, but I was hand-in-glove with Mrs. Smallpage."

"What! the wife of the late furniture dealer on Fifth Avenue?"

"Yes; I didn't know her in New York, but she has a house in Mayfair and hob-nobs with half the peerage. Good looks and money, that's all the Londoners care for. I heard a countess say that all Americans are alike. We have no aristocracy, therefore our social distinctions are absurd. The reception of an American in London depends on whether he is rich enough to entertain, good looking enough to be attractive, or queer enough to be amusing."

"I say, Duncan, we are just getting into the slip," said Van Vort, looking forward, "and you haven't told me yet where you are going, and what brought you aboard this ferry."

"Why, I met Harry Osgood this morning, just after I landed, and he asked me out to his place for Sunday. I hate New York on the blessed Sabbath, so here I am."

"I am bound for the Osgoods, too," answered Van Vort. "I am in luck to find some one

going out. But come on, we must hurry or we sha'n't get seats in the train."

The ferry-boat brushed violently against the side of the slip, and most of the passengers, losing their balance, were compelled to grasp each other unconventionally for support. The engine-room bell clanged furiously; there were more jars and creakings as the boat scraped past the great piles and reached her moorings; then the restless van horses stamped, the chains rattled over the windlasses, and the passengers crowded forward to the bows. The iron gates were opened, and the living sea of people flowed rapidly up the incline toward the railway station. It was the mighty ebbing of the human tide which daily floods the great city across the river. Could one stand there, watching the weary throng come forth, and, like the Spanish student of old, find a willing Asmodæus at one's elbow, what stories of hopes and disappointments, what tales of trouble and misery could he not unfold for inspection. Pallid shop-girls and weary seamstresses were there; grimy laborers with their tools, tired clerks, toiling mothers with their babes, and pale, careworn children, early

driven to the wheel, with here and there a face on whom prosperity had set her seal, and perhaps a few, like Duncan, whose lives are passed in that dazzling upper world, so hopelessly closed to the toiling masses. All these, and more, streamed off the ponderous ferry, hurrying to their homes. But Duncan and Van Vort had no time to moralize, and being anxious to get seats in the smoking car they pushed rapidly to the front of the moving mass of people, showed their tickets to the inspector, and passed through the station door to the platform.

The Morristown train was drawn up on the right-hand track. They found it already well filled with people brought over by the first boat; and after wandering the entire length of the smoking car they were about despairing of finding seats when they were hailed by a familiar voice: "Hello, fellows, where are you going?" Looking around they saw Howard-Jones, with a yellow-covered novel under his arm and a freshly lighted cigar between his lips, standing on the station platform and looking the picture of masculine content.

"We are trying to find a seat, but the place

is full," said Duncan. "Are you going on this train?"

"Yes; going out to Osgood's."

"So are we," put in Van Vort, "but we don't want to stand up all the way. You look as unconcerned as though you were sporting a private car."

"So I am," replied Howard-Jones carelessly. "Just go into the car ahead and find Waterman; mention the fact that you are friends of mine, and perhaps he will give you a seat, but be sure you speak politely. Waterman won't stand impertinence."

"Well, if you and he have seats in there, and there are no more to be had," said Duncan, "you might as well make up your mind to stand up. Come on, Rennsler, let's see if Howard-Jones is trying to do us." Saying this, Duncan started into the next car and was closely followed by Van Vort. This car had been kept till the last moment, so they found it just filling up, and at the farther end they discovered Waterman, trying to stretch himself over four seats and convince the numerous comers that they were engaged.

"I beg pardon, but can a lady have this

seat?" said Duncan, coming up behind Waterman.

"I am sorry, but it's engaged," grunted the latter without looking up. "This is a smoker anyway."

"Well, this lady is going to sit on your lap, you old brute."

"Hello, Duncan," said Waterman, looking up somewhat startled. "Osgood told me you were back; I am deuced glad to see you."

"Pull down those feet and give us some room, and then I'll talk," answered Duncan.

Waterman made room for his friends, and depositing their luggage on the floor they sat down opposite him. As the train moved slowly out of the station, Howard-Jones sauntered into the car and took the seat remaining, next to Waterman.

"Well, how is Chicago?" Waterman asked Duncan.

"Don't talk to him about Chicago," interrupted Van Vort. "Don't you know he has just come from London?"

"Of course I do, but I know all about London. I want to hear about Mr. Breezy and Miss Lakeside, and all the other queer people

one reads about in *Life* and *Puck*. Don't you remember the last time we saw Duncan? He was going gunning for elevators, and I want to hear about them. How are the pork-packers, Duncan?"

"I didn't meet any."

"What, and you went to Chicago!"

"Exactly," Duncan replied. "They say there that one has to go away to meet them. The right sort don't seem to know them."

"What were the people like, anyway?" asked Howard-Jones.

"The women are dears, some of the men are queer, most of them are passable, and a few are the whitest chaps I ever came across. I was treated like a prince. I lived at the City Club, and they could not do enough for me there."

"Did you get anything fit to eat?" asked Howard-Jones dubiously.

"You must imagine the people out there eat jerked venison and dine in their shirt-sleeves," replied Duncan. "They don't live in wigwams, and buffalo don't run wild in the streets."

"Don't get huffy, Duncan; I was only judg-

ing by what I had heard. You remember what Waterman said about Chicago."

"Yes, and I repeat again," replied that worthy, "it is the beastliest hole it has ever been my luck to get stranded in."

"Then you display your ignorance," said Duncan.

"I admit I have heard something about Chicago being the centre of the universe," retorted Waterman, "but I thought that opinion was confined to the breezy inhabitants of the windy city."

"Well, in my opinion," said Duncan, "Chicago isn't a half bad place. 'Tisn't New York, of course, but you can't expect that. They've got most of the things there that we have, and some that we haven't. There's one thing about the people, too, that I like; they keep awake when the rest of the world is dozing, and that is bound to tell in the end."

"That's right, Duncan," echoed Van Vort. "Sit down on sectional ignorance and prejudice. New Yorkers are getting to be as provincial as Parisians, and it is time they learned that the sun doesn't rise and set on Manhattan Island."

"You are all wrong, Rennsler," answered Howard-Jones. "Duncan is drawing a big salary for booming Chicago real estate; you'd do the same thing if you got paid for it."

"No back talk, Hyphenated-Jones," said Duncan facetiously. Just crawl behind that French novel and don't let me hear from you again."

"I will if you will shut up about Chicago; you make me weary."

"Anything to keep you quiet," answered Duncan.

The four friends gradually settled themselves behind afternoon papers or novels, and remained silent. The train rattled on through small suburban towns and now and then drew up before a dainty, vine-covered station, with low walls and high gabled roofs, where the brakeman put his head inside the door and called off some name in unintelligible accents. People got out hurriedly, their arms filled with packages of all descriptions, the door slammed, the train started, the newsboy passed through with the papers, pop-corn, puzzles, and everything else that nobody wanted, the conductor poked dozing passen-

gers for their tickets, the atmosphere grew blue with smoke, and the minutes passed with the exasperating slowness of time spent on a suburban train.

"I say, Duncan," said Waterman, yawning behind his paper, "how would you like to take this trip twice a day?"

"I'd rather die a natural death and be done with it, if I did not have a private opinion that Hades is a suburban town, where the Devil tortures his victims by making them bolt breakfast in two minutes and run to catch a train, only to be brought back again after dark just in time to sleep and take the next train in the morning."

"That's the joy of living in the country," replied Waterman. "However, I can tell you how to pass the time to-day."

"How?" asked Duncan.

"Go back and talk to the Simpson girls. I saw them getting into the last car, and I think they are going out to Osgood's, too."

"None of that for me."

"Better send Rennsler to look after them," suggested Waterman; "I think I can recommend him as a safe and suitable chaperon."

"What's that?" said Van Vort, glancing over his paper at the sound of his name.

"We think you had better go back and talk to the charming Miss Simpson," said Duncan.

"Which? The one with freckles, or the one who squints."

"Both," replied Waterman.

"From such a fate, good Lord deliver us," answered Van Vort contritely.

"Your prayer is answered," said Duncan, "for here we are at the getting-off place. I never remember the name of it, so I always book through to Morristown, and look out for that red barn over there."

The engine slackened its pace while the four friends hurriedly gathered their things together and walked toward the car door. When the train stopped they passed out and alighted on the deserted platform of a small country station. The village consisted of three or four houses and a barn, and the station was merely a covered shed and platform, without the usual complement of station-master, baggageman, etc. It was of so little importance that trains did not stop there

except by signal or request, and the Osgoods made use of it merely because it was nearer their place than was Morristown. On this occasion, however, there was no one there to meet the travelers, and it seemed to them that they had been forgotten. The train had pulled out immediately, and they were left to their own resources in a small, New Jersey hamlet, four miles from their destination. There was no one in sight except the Simpson girls, who had alighted at the other end of the platform, and the four men felt it their duty to wander toward them and proffer such civilities as the occasion demanded.

"We had no idea you were on the train," said Duncan, as they reached the place where the girls were standing. "I suppose you are bound for the Osgoods?"

"Yes," replied the elder Miss Simpson, "but we seem to be stranded here. What shall we do?"

"Wait until we are rescued," said Van Vort. "I don't believe Osgood is cruel enough to leave us here long."

"No, by Jove! for there are his leaders," interposed Waterman, as a team of chestnuts

and a smart char-à-bancs, driven by Harry Osgood himself, with his wife on the box seat, swept rapidly around the corner of Duncan's red barn. There were two girls sitting behind the Osgoods, whom they recognized as Miss Warner and Miss Reine Merrit,—two of their set,—and the men had just time to take off their hats before the trap was driven up beside the platform.

"Been waiting long?" called Osgood, as he pulled up his team. "My near leader picked up a stone, and I have the stage timed so close that any delay makes me late."

"It will teach you to take more time, Harry," said his wife, as, without accepting the proffered aid of a servant, she jumped to the ground. "How do you do, everybody," she continued, when she lighted on the platform. "Why, Duncan Grahame! Where in heaven's name did you come from?"

"From London, to see you, but I don't seem to be expected," replied Duncan.

"I forgot to tell Helen I had asked you, but it's all right," called Harry Osgood from his high seat.

"Of course it is," replied his wife, "but I

wish you wouldn't shock me so again. I thought I had seen a ghost."

"Never mind ghosts, but get the people up," said her husband.

Harry Osgood's char-à-bancs was a vehicle he had had constructed for use over the rough country roads. It was built somewhat like the two boots of a drag put together without the body, and had seats for ten persons, besides the servants, placed in three rows, and all facing forward, while its lightness rendered it very convenient for the purpose for which it was designed. The servants stowed the luggage away and Mrs. Osgood assigned places to the party. The elder Miss Simpson was given the box seat, the next was occupied by Reine Merrit, Waterman, Howard-Jones, and the younger Miss Simpson, while Miss Warner, Van Vort, Duncan and Helen Osgood mounted to the remaining one.

"Let em go," shouted Osgood as he shoved the brake back. The grooms jumped from the horses heads, the wheelers sprang into their collars, and the trap rolled away from the station. "Oakhurst," the Osgood place, was a short four miles distant, and the road,

a fairly good one for America, ran, for the most part, through a forest of maples, broken here and there by the country seat of some New Yorker, or an occasional farm. The country was quite rolling, and the road, running as it did over a succession of small hills, made the driving a delight to Harry Osgood. He was a coachman who had learned his trade in England, and having been a subscriber to the *Guildford Coach* for two seasons, he was able to "sit his bench" like a veteran, and work his team with the smartness of one who has done "out of London roading"; but, with all his experience he was not a careful workman. He invariably made the four miles, from the station to his house, a galloping stage, and it was his pride to do the distance just under the twenty minutes; so, as soon as he turned the corner by the red barn, he sprang his team into a gallop, and they scarcely trotted another step of the way. Up hill and down the horses scampered, while the trap rocked like a ship at sea, now to this side and now to that, and when rounding the corners it often seemed as though the vehicle would certainly be turned over and the entire

party landed in a hopeless muddle in the ditch; but nothing worse than a few feminine screams occurred until they reached the place where the road entered the Morristown turnpike.

Here Osgood espied another team coming up the main road, and as both traps were about an equal distance from the fork, he considered it a glorious chance for a race; so, giving his horses their heads, he urged them into a run. The driver of the other four, as ready for sport as Osgood, did the same, and the two traps came furiously on to where the roads met. The men cheered while the women held on to their seats, trembling with fright; and as the two traps came together at the fork, the other coachman tried to crowd in front of Osgood by taking some of the latter's road. There was no time to pull up, and seeing that his only safety from a wicked upset was to beat his rival, Osgood called on his horses for an extra spurt. The leaders were neck and neck, and the stranger had crowded him so far toward the edge of the road that he felt his hind wheel slipping down the embankment. The women shut their eyes and

screamed while the men prepared to jump, but Osgood, acting with presence of mind, hit his rival's off-wheeler across the head with his whip, and "toweled" his own wheelers a good stinging cut across the shoulders. The wheel horse of the other trap, frightened at this sudden attack, jumped toward the pole, and, with his weight, swayed the vehicle toward the near side of the road, while Osgood's own wheelers sprang forward under the lashing and drew the trap onto the road before it had time to upset. Osgood darted ahead of his rival, and the party breathed freer as all visions of broken limbs and mangled bodies vanished from their frightened minds.

"Well done, old man," called Howard-Jones, who was himself a coaching man. "I like sport, but such a lubberly bit of work as that ought not to go unpunished."

"A man who will do a trick like that ought not to be trusted with a donkey," replied Osgood, as he pulled his team together after the excitement of the spurt.

"That's the trouble, nowadays," continued Howard-Jones. "After a lesson or two in the park, at team work, chaps set up as experienced coachmen."

"Who is the duffer, anyway?" called Duncan from behind.

"Jack Ashton. You know him, don't you?" replied Howard-Jones. "He has the place just beyond Harry's."

"I ought to," said Duncan. "He was in my class at college. I didn't recognize him, though."

"Do you always forget your friends so easily?" said Helen Osgood with an ironical sparkle in her blue-black eyes.

"Sometimes I try to," Duncan answered.

"Are you always successful?" she asked.

"No, Helen," he whispered, "not always."

The trap had reached the stone gateway of the Osgood place. As they turned in, a call was sounded on the horn to announce their coming to the servants, and, after passing the lodge, they could see the low, white country house, with rambling wings and numerous stables and outhouses in the rear, standing on a rise of ground at the end of the winding road. The place had been in the Osgood family for more than a hundred years. The oak-covered grounds about the house, and the green, rolling lawn in front, were typical of an

English park; but the old wooden, colonial house, with its rambling additions and green blinds, its stately veranda and Doric columned portico, was American, of a type fast disappearing before the modern house decorator with his tints and *bibelots*.

The trap dashed up to the door, a knot of servants appeared, the grooms placed the ladder against the steps, and the guests alighted and were conducted to their apartments, where, for the next hour, the house party was occupied in the task of dressing for dinner.

CHAPTER X.

"I WILL LAUGH, TOO."

Harry Osgood was a man whose life was devoted to sport, and as he had inherited a large fortune, he was able to indulge his tastes to the fullest extent. Some one of his friends had said facetiously, that he was fond of horses, hounds, and his wife, in the order named, and no one who knew him well would deny that more of his life was spent in his stables and kennels than in his home. He had passed many years in England, and most of his time there was spent in a hard riding country, where everyone, including the parson, followed the hounds. To Osgood, therefore, there was no sport like hunting, and no music like the inspiriting cry of the pack. He had been brought up on the "pigskin" and felt a supreme contempt for many of the men about New York who went in for sport, not for the love of it, but as a pose which enabled them to wear the pink and talk the slang of the

shires. He had seen so many chaps of that description come an ignominious "cropper" at the first fence, that he paid little attention to the talk of the clubs, and never passed his opinion on a would-be sportsman until he saw him in the hunting field. In his opinion it took something more than a pink coat to make a hunting man, so he endeavored to collect around him, in New Jersey, a few of as hard riders as ever followed hounds.

The Essex Hunt had become famous for its long runs, and as few men not born to the saddle cared to risk their necks over the rolling country about Morristown, this hunt was decidedly unpopular with the drawing-room sportsmen. However, if the field was small at the meet, it diminished little at the finish. For years Harry Osgood had been M. F. M. of the Essex Hunt, and the pack could not have been in better hands, as he had a capital huntsman of long experience with the Quorn Hunt, and he devoted his own time, during the hunting season, entirely to the sport. Osgood had this peculiarity, however, he must have sport all the year round; so he was as much at home on the box seat, or at the

tiller, as in the saddle. There is a popular impression that a man cannot be both a horseman and a sailor, but Harry Osgood had often refuted it. In the summer months, when there was no hunting, and it was too hot for driving, he went to sea, and his schooner, "Persephone," was one of the crack flyers of the N. Y. Y. C. fleet, while her owner was a qualified navigator who had taken an English Board of Trade yachtsman's certificate.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Helen Osgood entered little into her husband's life, for, except when frost was in the ground, he had no time to devote to his wife. Helen, however, heartily approved of his neglect, and, except for the fact that he compelled her to reside so much of the time in the country, was perfectly satisfied with her husband. She always managed to have at least one amusing man in the house who did not go in for hunting, and as she never interfered with Harry's sport, theirs was a *ménage* where husband and wife were both contented and amused. The world had been surprised at Harry Osgood's marriage, but probably no one was more astonished than himself. A country

house, a rare day's sport, a good dinner, a cozy corner, a pair of bewitching blue-black eyes, a hasty word, and his fate was sealed before he had had time fully to realize the situation; but, having been "landed," as he expressed it, he made up his mind to bear it like a man and make the best of a hasty bargain. The marriage was, however, no surprise to Helen. She had carefully arranged it in her mind several months before, and Harry Osgood's proposal was but the consummation of her plans. He was precisely the kind of man that she considered an attractive, poor girl ought to marry, and women like Helen seem to possess a faculty for adjusting their lives according to their desires. She was the only woman whom Duncan Grahame had ever asked to be his wife, and perhaps for the reason that she had refused him, she continued to occupy the most central cell of his somewhat honeycombed heart. She had declined to marry Duncan because, at that time, he was poor, and she knew that he possessed too quick a perception, and too arbitrary a disposition, to be a suitable husband for a woman of her ambitions. She had, however,

since her marriage, granted Duncan the privileges of a somewhat equivocal friendship, which, owing to a general misconception of Helen Osgood's character, the world often misapprehended. Her acquaintances fancied her unhappy in her home life, but she was perfectly contented. Her friends believed she was a woman of strong feelings and sympathies, but she was subtle and calculating. The world thought her friendship for Duncan must be of a serious nature, while, in reality, it was scarcely more than a *passe temps*. Though not harassed by any scruples, she was too cold really to love, and too clever actually to compromise herself. But she was, however, sufficiently selfish to receive without giving, and sufficiently vain to enjoy the continued admiration of so scarred and complex a heart as Duncan's. She had been gifted with a peculiar insight into human character, and having studied the nature of man as a scientist might that of a mollusk, she felt that she understood every masculine vagary. Prompted mostly by curiosity, she singled out Duncan as the specimen best calculated to demand the full exercise of her powers. If

she had, at times, permitted certain familiarities which the world might not entirely approve, she had been careful to define the boundaries beyond which they must not pass; and the fact that his actions were governed in a manner so contrary to his wishes kept Duncan in a continuous state of irritation, and served at the same time to produce a continuity of affection quite unusual in his other experiences.

For nearly four years this peculiar friendship, so galling to Duncan, so gratifying to Helen, had continued intermittently; and though many ruptures had occurred, they had all ended in Duncan's suing for peace. The long continuance of so unnatural a relation was rendered possible only by the fact that Helen Osgood had, so far, been incapable of experiencing the feelings of other women, and seeing no reason to transgress where there was no temptation, she contented herself with inspiring a love where others excited a passing fancy. Other women might amuse Duncan, but she would control him; other women might love him, but she would study him; other women might lose him, but she would

remain his master. That was her analysis of the affair, and, so far, she felt that it had been correct. It is true she had not seen Duncan since the quarrel in January, and she knew that he must, in the meantime, have been intimate with other women; but she felt confident that he would come back to her and plead again for the love she had so often refused him. She did not believe that Duncan's passion was of a lofty nature. On the contrary, she doubted his sincerity just as she doubted the sincerity of every man of the world. She knew perfectly well the view of life held by the men about her, and she often said that were she a man she would be a free-booter too, and capture the hearts that came in her way. She thought that if a woman was weak enough to be trapped into taking a false step, she got her deserts. She, for one, would go armed, not because her conscience troubled her, but because she did not consider the game worth the risk.

The unexpected return of Duncan had been somewhat of a surprise to Helen; but, in order to impress upon him that it was a matter of indifference to her, she avoided

him as much as possible during the evening of his arrival at Oakhurst. The house party spent the evening playing pool in the billiard-room, and in that atmosphere of whiskey, soda, and smoke, where the conversation was hilarious and general, and often interspersed with familiar repartee and laughter, it was not difficult for Helen to keep Duncan at a convenient distance, while, however much he might chafe under the restraint, he was unable to free himself from his unpleasant position. There is nothing so exasperating to a man of Duncan's disposition and experience as to feel that he is being made a fool of by a woman. Though nothing had been said, Duncan realized the galling fact that Helen Osgood was playing with him. After the women had gone to bed he sat in the smoking-room, sulking over his "night-cap," and though Osgood and Howard-Jones carried on a heated discussion about the merits of perch bits, he paid not the slightest attention to what was being said. Waterman and Van Vort occasionally tried to chaff him, but he was so snappish in his manner that they wisely decided to let him alone. Meanwhile Duncan

was thinking of the time, at Newport, when, jogging home after a day with the hounds, he had asked Helen Osgood to marry him. He had felt confident that she would do so, but instead, he got laughed at for his sincerity, and he had been laughed at ever since. He had often brought himself to the point of believing that he did not care for her, but the next time he was brought under her subtle influence he was compelled to acknowledge that he was still under her spell. Other women had surrendered to him with a facility that destroyed the pleasure of an exciting contest, but other women were not Helen Osgood.

The next morning none of the house party put in an appearance before eleven o'clock, and it was not until luncheon that they all met together. Some of the men had, it is true, been out to the kennels, and Osgood and Howard-Jones had taken out a tandem—much to the horror of neighboring Sabbath-keepers —but Mrs. Osgood and the girls managed to keep secluded until the luncheon-hour. Dinner was the only formal meal at Oakhurst, and there was a freedom about the life that made

it very attractive to the men. Any sort of lounging costume was permissible during the daytime, and the guests straggled in at luncheon without regard for promptness. No one waited for the others, and the last to come was the last to be served. The conversation was chiefly about horses and dogs, with social gossip for a relish, but no topic more intellectual than the last French novel or the latest comedy at Daly's was permissible. In fact, any one bold enough to inaugurate a literary or political discussion would have been greeted with a stare of mingled pity and astonishment. If any of the guests were acquainted with matters literary or artistic, they were usually discreet enough to remain silent out of deference to the host; but on one occasion a school friend of Helen's, from Boston, hearing some remarks about the last story of Bourget, took the opportunity to start a discussion upon the poetic psychology of Sully-Prudhomme, which was greeted in a manner that made the poor girl fancy she had said something very indiscreet. At the first favorable opportunity, however, Helen reassured her, but advised her not to talk about books,

if she wanted to get on with the Essex Hunt.

On the present occasion the conversation was confined to the stables, and after luncheon the house party sought amusement for the afternoon. Osgood suggested a drive, so a team was put to the drag, and the afternoon, until tea-time, was spent behind three chestnuts and a piebald "tooled" by the host.

Meanwhile Duncan chafed under the discipline to which he felt he was being carefully subjected, but it was not until after an elaborately prepared dinner, served by the late butler of His Grace, the Duke of Northampton, and two footmen, that he was permitted a word alone with Helen. The other guests had gone into the drawing-room, at Helen's suggestion, to listen to Van Vort's latest comic song, and feeling that they would be off her hands for a while, she detained Duncan in the passage-way leading to the library. Between the two doors was a broad lounge, which had been placed there to offer an opportunity for a quiet talk, and Helen took the initiative by seating herself and motioning Duncan to a place beside her. He sat down sulkily, and remained silent for a while, trying to drive

off the peculiarly helpless feeling which a man invariably experiences in the presence of a woman whose personality is stronger than his own. Duncan plunged his hands into his pockets and sank into a corner of the lounge, mentally deciding that he was an ass, and trying to bring his reason to control his feelings. He looked at Helen a moment, but when he met her glance, he winced and turned his eyes away, and she felt that she had not been wrong in her confidence that he would come back to her unchanged.

"You are solemn enough for a *croque-mort*," said Helen, after a few moments of silence. "Aren't you going to amuse me?"

"No," grunted Duncan peevishly, "you brought me here."

"I didn't bring you here to sulk. I hope, for your own sake, you haven't been behaving this way for the past six months. I understand you, but strangers might not appreciate such manners." She said this in the indifferent manner she invariably assumed when Duncan indulged in a display of temper, and it was this indifference which always made his outbursts so abortive.

"There is no need to behave so with strangers," he replied, trying to assume a sarcastic manner, and feeling, inwardly, that it was not successful. "They are usually civil to me."

"O, indeed! and pray how do I treat you?"

"Like a dog," he sneered gruffly.

"Like a pet poodle," she replied, "whom I allow to lie about the house in the snuggest corners; like a pet poodle whom I fondle when he is agreeable, and humor when he is snappish; but take care how you behave or I may think you are only a puppy."

Duncan jumped to his feet. "I won't be blackguarded," he muttered angrily.

Helen leaned forward and caught his hand.

"Come, Duncan, dear," she said, drawing him gently toward her, "you must sit down and tell me who it was that commenced this quarrel."

Duncan permitted himself to be drawn to the seat beside her. His heart was consumed with conflicting sentiments, but he felt that the courage which had made the quarrel in January possible was failing, and that he would be compelled to sue for peace. "I am not a child," he said, as though to expostulate against her manner.

"Yes, you are," answered Helen softly, "but a big, lovable child of whom I am very fond."

Duncan looked into her eyes to see if he could read behind her words, but he only felt the deep, mysterious power which had brought him under her influence that day in Newport. Then he had felt a hopeful, honest love, for a moment, but it had been crushed out by her laughter. Before that he had been a thoughtless boy, taking life as only a holiday frolic. Had she given him her love, he felt that to him life would have been different; but that laughter had chilled his heart, and the hopeful, honest love had gone out forever. She had married and he had loved her again, but it was a feeling of a different sort, for the man who speaks of love to a married woman casts out honesty from his heart. He loved her with a heated longing which her coldness fanned. He wanted to possess her for his own, yet felt that he was balked by his stupidity and cowardice. In her presence he was a shrinking child with the yearning of a man. "Helen," he said, after a moment, "I will not be played with; I am too much in earnest."

"You frighten me by your seriousness," she

said, with a roguish tone in her voice. "I like you better when you are angry. It suits you."

"I will not be trifled with, Helen," he said; "you have no right to treat me so."

"I have the right of a billigerent," she laughed. "You declared war, you remember."

"Then I sue for peace."

"And I grant it," she replied softly, putting out her hand. "Come, let us be friends."

Duncan took her hand and pressed it to his lips. He looked up into her tantalizing eyes and felt again the warm impulse of the old love burning in his heart. "I cannot be your friend, Helen," he said passionately, "for I love you."

She drew her hand away quickly and patted his cheek disapprovingly, as she might have patted a child's; then with a little, playful laugh, she said: "don't be silly, you know I don't like it."

Man of the world as he was, without scruples and usually reckless, he felt cowed. For a moment he sat moving his hands nervously; then he looked up and asked in a serious tone: "Why didn't you marry me?"

"Because I liked you too well."

"That is no answer."

"Because I wanted to keep your love."

"That is not true."

"Well, because marriage is a business partnership, which, to be successful, requires a person of experience and a person of money. You had too much experience and I had no money, *le voila.*"

"You are a heartless flirt," Duncan said, slowly and earnestly.

"That's what a man always says of a woman when he fails to make her love him."

"You are a heartless flirt, I repeat," he answered. "You stole the best love in my heart; you crushed it and threw it aside like a flower which no longer pleased you."

"Nonsense, Duncan, such poetic similes are ridiculous. Better say that love, to a man, is an apple of Sodom, fair to behold; but when he has it in his grasp it crumbles to sickening ashes."

"You stole my love, Helen; a man never loves but once."

"And in revenge, to use your metaphor, you have plucked and trampled under foot every flower within your reach. I know you, Dun-

can. It is only because I was stronger than the rest that I still bloom fair in your eyes."

Duncan looked full into Helen's face with an injured expression in his eyes. "Helen," he said finally, "'tis women like you who make us men distrust your sex; who make us what we are."

Helen returned his glance, and replied scornfully: "No; it is men like you who drag us down. We women must go through life armed, like travelers of old, against the attacks of you highwaymen. If we are weak, we are robbed of our best possessions, and left helpless by the way; if we are strong and ward off your attacks, you take your revenge on those who fall into your unscrupulous hands. But that is moralizing, and I am no moralist; I take the world as it is."

"Then why not take the pleasure in it?" said Duncan insinuatingly.

"Because it doesn't amuse me," she answered coldly. "I am not like other women, I suppose; at least, what you call pleasure disgusts me."

"Then why have you let me be your friend so long?"

"Because you amuse me," she replied carelessly. "I like to see you bluster and go away, and then come back to me. Other women pander to you, but I don't; other women love you, but I don't."

As Duncan listened to these words, a blush of anger came to his cheek. He thought of how strong had been his influence over other women, and how weak he had always been in Helen's hands. "After all, love is a game of strength," he mused. He had been no better than a ball to be tossed about at pleasure, but he would throw off the spell of this woman, which had bound him so fast—he who thought he knew the world so well. An expression of firmness came into his face, and he said: "I loved you once, Helen, but I hate you now."

"I am glad," she answered; "now there is a chance that your passion will be returned."

Duncan did not reply. He left his seat beside her and walked slowly into the next room. Helen's eyes followed him. "Silly boy," she thought, "I hope he will hate me; I might love him then."

Long after the lights in the smoking-room had gone out, long after the laughter had

ceased, Duncan slowly paced his room. His hands were deep in his pockets and he held a briar pipe between his lips. Occasionally he would take a draw at the pipe, and then watch the blue smoke curl gently upward and fade away in long, thin streaks; but all the time he was thinking over the part Helen Osgood had played in his life. "She is right," he said, half aloud; "I do bluster and go away, and come back to her, and I will do it again. No, by Jove! I won't. A man can't forget that he has been played fast and loose with, and I would not be a man if I went back to that woman. I hate her. I hate her," he repeated. "She might have made a different man of me. I was young and might have taken life better, but she laughed me into the selfish brute I am. O, well," he sighed, as he thought of his past, "I suppose I am no worse than those around me. We all worry over what might have been, but we don't take the pleasure that comes to us. A man's an ass to break his neck for any woman. There are others in the world, good looking ones, too, who will love for the asking." He returned his pipe to its case and closed it with a loud snap. "I

have been in the garden before," he continued, "and I will go there again and pluck the flowers that come in my path. I will hold them for a minute; then I will crush them and cast them aside, and I will laugh, too."

CHAPTER XI.

UNDER THE WILLOWS.

The bell of the Fairville Presbyterian Church was slowly tolling the hour of morning service, and its tones, clanging out through the bright green shutters of the belfry on the peaceful Sabbath air, summoned the congregation to worship. The sun shone brightly upon the little white church, with its peaked roof and its tall, weather-vaned steeple, and its rays glanced hotly down upon the dusty roadway and wooden sidewalks of the long, village street. Two rows of white frame houses, fronted by little green patches, each enclosed by a picket fence and a swinging gate, extended away in the distance. Two lines of stately elms cast their shadows partially over the dusty street, while above them stretched the blue vault of the June sky.

The tolling of the bell was the only sound that disturbed the perfect quiet of the day, for even the birds seemed to have ceased their

chirping in deference to the Sabbath. Soon, however, in answer to the call to prayer, the little picket gates swung open, and far down the street a slender line of people began to walk, with the measured tread of conscious righteousness, toward the little church which gleamed so white in the sunshine at the end of the street. The board walk creaked under the squeaking tread of Sunday shoes, and solemn lips spoke in subdued Sunday tones, as elders and laity slowly wended along under the shade of the stately elms. White lawn dresses, leghorn bonnets and blue shawls, folded crosswise, and lisle-thread gloves, were interspersed among flopping broadcloth coats and straight brimmed hats in the throng which passed along the street and through the doors of the church. Once, just after the last tone of the bell had died away, the stillness was broken by the rumble of wheels, and a single carriage rolled through the dust up to the church door. It was a modest equipage, plain in its appointments, but some of the congregation frowned disapprovingly as the door opened and Florence Moreland and her father descended. Without heeding these glances of disappro-

bation, they walked quietly into the church and passed down the long aisle to the family pew. The movement of numerous fans ceased and many heads were turned to see the Judge and his daughter take their seats, while several pairs of young and envious eyes were directed toward the last production of a city milliner. After the fans had begun to move again, the cadaverous minister rose from his seat and in harsh, nasal tones announced the hymn. There was a hemming and coughing in the choir's gallery, the organ bellows wheezed, hymn-books rustled, and then, as the first strains of the organ sounded, the old familiar lines beginning, "All people that on earth do dwell," swelled forth in zealous tones.

Just as the last notes of the tune floated away and the congregation were taking their seats, a man stole quietly down the aisle and entered the pew behind Florence Moreland. His well-made clothes attracted curious eyes, and during the seemingly interminable prayer for the exorcism of every evil and the granting of all known blessings, many covert glances were sent in his direction. It seemed to those who looked, that during the prayer and the

long didactic discourse upon Solomon and Sheba's queen, which followed, his eyes were kept continuously fixed upon the back of a gold-braided jacket in front of him. The doctor's daughter next him glanced over his book during the last hymn and saw that it was not open at the right place, while the elder who passed the plate looked wonderingly at the young Crœsus who placed a greenback among the coppers and silver; but during the entire service his eyes were not removed from the form in front of him. The last roll of the organ died away and the minister pronounced his benedictory prayer. During the conventional moment of silence which followed, the sun streamed through the stained glass windows and danced in colored shadows on the backs of the white lawn gowns; then the frocks rustled as the congregation slowly filed out, and the solemn, Sunday faces were relaxed into smiles of friendly greeting.

Florence Moreland waited until most of the people had passed out, then she placed her hand upon the pew door, and was about to open it, when she was startled by the sight of

a familiar face behind her. "Harold," she said, when she had recovered from her surprise. "What brought you to Fairville?"

"I came as the bearer of a message for you," Harold Wainwright replied, as he opened the pew door for her.

"For me! From whom?" asked Florence in astonishment.

"If I may walk home with you I will tell you; otherwise you must wait."

"You are very dictatorial," she replied, "but when a woman's curiosity is aroused, she is easily managed. If father will drive home alone, I consent to your terms. Father," she continued, turning around and interrupting a conversation which Judge Moreland was holding with an elder, "here is Harold Wainwright."

"Glad to see you, Harold," said the Judge, taking Wainwright's hand and giving it the hearty shake of unaffected cordiality. "Glad to see the son of the best friend I ever had. You must bring your grip up to the ouse. What brought you to Fairville?"

Harold was about to reply to these numerous and disconnected remarks, but he was in-

terrupted by Florence. "Harold brings news I must hear; he won't tell me unless I promise to let him walk home with me. Do you mind, father?"

"Certainly not. I'll take Elder Jones home —if I can persuade him to ride on Sunday," the Judge added in a whisper.

"Very well, then. Good-by, father," said Florence, moving toward the door.

"Good-by, children. It's a hot day, so don't hurry. If you want to stop under the willows to rest, I sha'n't mind, and I'll wait lunch for you. Don't forget to move up to the house, Harold."

"Thank you, Judge," said Harold, "but as I leave in the morning, I don't believe I had better bother you."

"Nonsense, my boy," called the Judge. "I'll send down for your traps this afternoon."

When Florence and Harold reached the street, the congregation had mostly dispersed. Instead of following the villagers along under the shady elms into the heart of the village, they turned to the left, and tramped in the hot sun toward the shore of the little lake which lay at the end of the town. Judge

Moreland's place was on the opposite bank, and although the grey tower on the north wing of the house, rising above the surrounding oak trees, seemed quite near, they were obliged to follow the road for a mile and a half along the lake shore. About half way was a clump of willow trees growing by the water, under whose shade they had often stopped to rest. Florence and Harold both loved this little lake, sunk like a gem amid the rough setting of the mountain crags, and they both felt, instinctively, that they did not care to talk much until they reached their old haunt under the willows. Even Florence forgot her curiosity, and as she walked beside Harold over the road they had so often tramped together, she seemed to forget that he had been away, and that at their last meeting in distant Chicago so much that was unpleasant had occurred. Here in the New Hampshire mountains all seemed so different; she felt freed from the tainted atmosphere of the city which had made her restless and uncertain in mind. Florence had not forgotten her last words with Harold in Chicago; indeed she had thought of them over and over again,

during the long months that had passed since that interview; the unpleasant episode at the Renaissance Club was also seldom absent from her mind; but to-day it all seemed to have faded quietly from her heart. Harold had come into church so silently, and it seemed so natural to be walking by his side, that she was carried back to the years before she went to Europe, when, still a child, she used to romp and play with him over these same New Hampshire hills.

They reached the willows, and Florence sat down on the green turf and leaned her back against a tree. She took off her hat and let the breeze cool her temples, while Harold, stretched out on the bank beside her, lay for a while resting upon his elbow, and carelessly watching the pebbles, he threw from time to time, skip lightly from ripple to ripple and finally sink from sight. The sunlight danced on the gently ruffled surface of the water; in the distance the bold side of a mountain rose abruptly above the lake, its rough outlines standing out sharply in relief against the clear blue of the sky; and the little white farmhouses, perched here and there high up on its slopes, glistened in the sunshine.

They sat there enjoying the scene, until Florence seemed to awaken, as from a pleasant dream, and feel all her troubled thoughts come rudely back to her. She remembered that Harold had come from the distant city in the West and had not yet told her the meaning of his unexpected visit. "We must not dream on forever, Harold," she said, as he lazily sent another pebble skipping from wave to wave; "you have not yet told me the nature of the message you have brought."

Harold slightly shifted his position and, resting his head on his hand, looked up into her face with a surprised expression, as though he, too, had forgotten the present and was startled at being called back to it. "I brought a command for you to return to Chicago," he said, smiling.

"A command from whom?" she asked in astonishment.

"Here it is," he answered, reaching into his pocket and producing a letter which he handed to Florence.

It was addressed in Marion Sanderson's hand. Florence hastily broke the seal and read as follows:

"DEAREST FLORENCE:—

"I have never forgiven you for your sudden flight last winter, and the offense is of such long standing that I summon you to appear in Chicago before Derby Day to answer a charge of infidelity to me. You will be imprisoned here for at least one month,—longer if possible,—and I charge Mr. Wainwright with the execution of this warrant. In other words, dearest girl, I cannot live any longer without seeing you, and must have you here for a visit. Pack up and come immediately, as the Derby is a great 'function' here, and is run on the twenty-first of June.

"With a world of love,

"I am, your devoted

"MARION."

"Did you come all the way from Chicago to bring me this?" Florence asked, after she had finished the letter.

Harold was sitting up now, and looking into her face he said quietly: "I came to tell you again that I love you."

Florence felt a sudden emotion thrill her heart, but a doubtful expression came into her eyes as she glanced down and said slowly: "You forget what happened the day before I left Chicago."

Harold smiled. He took her hand and held it firmly between his own. "I remember that you are the bravest girl in the world," he said, "and that, to save a friend, you accused yourself."

"You don't know that," said Florence anxiously.

"I know that nothing could make me believe you did wrong, for you are incapable of it." Then he added earnestly: "I know, too, that I love you better than my life."

Florence looked up into his face and he must have read her answer in those gentle, brown eyes, for, without waiting for her to speak, he drew her to his side and kissed her on both cheeks. "I love you, I love you," he repeated, as he held her tightly in his strong arms; "but I must hear love spoken by those dear lips."

"I love you, Harold," she said, and the words made his heart leap with happiness.

"Then why were you so cruel to me last winter?" he asked reproachfully.

"I did not know it then," she answered. "It was not until I left the smoky city and came away into the free country air that I knew I cared for you, Harold, dear."

"I wondered you cared for me at all," he replied laughingly. "We had been friends so long that it was strange for me to speak of love."

"Yes; I always believed that love was some giant who crushes one by his mighty power," she said, "and I found he was a little rascal who stole into my heart before I knew he was anywhere about. But, O, Harold, I am so happy now."

She rested her head on his shoulder and looked up into his face again. He kissed her, and, as he did so, the wind caught Marion Sanderson's note lying in her lap, and carried it out onto the lake, where, resting on the water, it sailed slowly away toward the western shore. Harold saw it and asked what message it bore from her to Marion.

"I had forgotten the note," she answered. "It makes me think of that woman and the danger poor Marion was in. I had better not go to Chicago," she said, after a moment's thought.

"Why not, sweet one?" asked Harold.

"Because of that woman. She would say such things about me."

Harold smiled. "Don't you think they would have been said long ago, if she had intended saying them?" he asked.

"Perhaps she did say them, though I have heard nothing, and one usually hears the unpleasant things that are said of one."

"I know you have heard nothing, dear," he replied, "and I know you never will."

"You forget what I admitted to her, and you don't know what a spiteful woman is capable of."

"I know Mrs. McSeeney," he said.

"And you think that she can be trusted? I am surprised at you, Harold."

"I think she is the last woman in the world I would trust," he replied.

"Then what do you mean?" she asked.

"Mrs. McSeeney and I are old acquaintances. I think I can answer for her."

"You speak in enigmas, Harold, and you ought not to keep any secrets from me, you know."

"I don't think you had better ask to know more," he said laughingly.

"But I do," she answered.

"Then I obey. Mrs. McSeeney and I were

at Bar Harbor the same summer. I got to know her very well, perhaps better than she liked."

"Well, what has that to do with the affair in Chicago?" Florence asked impatiently.

"Nothing much except that Mrs. McSeeney thinks it would be wise never to mention it."

"Why?"

"I can't tell you. It is a secret between Mrs. McSeeney and myself."

"Harold Wainwright," she said, in a tone of authority that startled him, "I forbid you to have any secrets from me."

"Well," replied Harold, "if you command me to tell more, I must admit that Mrs. McSeeney and I had a confidential talk directly after it happened, and I persuaded her that she had better not mention the matter again."

"You persuaded her? How ridiculous! You must have threatened her with something. What was it?"

"I merely asked her if she remembered a certain evening at Bar Harbor when there was a *fête* at the Canoe Club."

"Well, what of it? I don't see anything unusual in that."

"I can't tell you more; only when I reminded her of that evening she acknowledged that it would be discreet for her to remain silent concerning you and Marion Sanderson. You see I happened accidentally to observe some of Mrs. McSeeney's actions on that occasion, and, considering that you were in her power, I felt justified in informing her of the fact."

"Then it was you who saved Marion and me from her spiteful tongue," said Florence in a relieved tone. "You don't know how grateful I am, and how I have worried over that matter."

"You need worry no longer, my girl," replied Harold. "But I must tell you again how plucky you were to try to save your friend in the way you did, and now let's forget all about it."

"Yes, dear," said Florence fondly. "We have pleasanter things to think of."

"'Tis true, my darling," he replied, taking both of her hands in his. "To-day you have made me the happiest man in the world. Do you know why I love you?"

"No; why?"

"Because you have so much common sense."

Florence smiled. "I never showed it until I began to love you," she replied; "but what time do you suppose it is? Just think of poor papa waiting all this time."

"Only to find he has lost his best possession," answered Harold.

Judge Moreland was sitting in the library when they reached the house, and although he had been waiting patiently for nearly an hour since the servant had announced luncheon, he did not seem ill-humored, for, on seeing the delinquents enter, he smiled good-humoredly, and shook his head with mock disapproval, as he said: "Three-quarters of an hour late, children. That is more than I bargained for, but you will be punished. The luncheon is cold and you will be compelled to eat it without grumbling."

Harold took Florence's hand and they both stood before the Judge; then Harold said penitently: "The fault is mine, sir, but I have a greater sin to answer for. I have robbed you of your daughter, and I come to ask your clemency."

"I think I understand," answered the Judge.

"Yours is a very grave offense, and the only way you can obtain pardon is by seeking benefit of clergy. Florence, my girl, come here and let me kiss you. You have made me very happy."

"Happy," echoed Florence, "I feared you would never forgive me."

"Not forgive you for loving the son of Judge Wainwright? He was my best friend and his son will make my daughter the best husband in the world. Give me your hand, Harold," he continued, after he had kissed Florence affectionately, "you are your father's own boy."

"That is the best compliment you could pay me," answered Harold.

"I know it is, and you know I mean it when I say I expect to see you on the federal bench yourself some day."

"Luncheon is getting cold, sir," said the old family butler, coming into the room and looking far from amiable.

"Let it wait, Thomas," said the Judge, "until you can get a bottle of champagne up from the cellar. We have some healths to drink to-day, haven't we, children?"

That evening the little church was lighted up for evening service, and again the rustling of fans ceased, and heads were turned around as Florence and Harold took their seats. But Harold's eyes were no longer directed toward the pew in front of him, and the doctor's daughter remarked that the two people in front of her stood unnecessarily close to each other during the hymns, while the postmaster's wife made up her mind that people who "smirk and look so silly durin' meetin' must be sparkin'." In fact the homely folk of Fairville were not slow of perception; many were the gossiping heads put together that night, and it was a curious coincidence that there was no dissenting voice in regard to the probability of a certain event having taken place that afternoon.

Going home that night, Florence and Harold walked with the tarrying step of lovers, but the Judge was not waiting luncheon, and, as the evening was warm and bright, they rested again under the willows, watching the moonlight play on the ripples of the lake. They were planning for the future, and many were the rosy tinted castles reared in that

soft night air under the shade of the trees they loved so well. The moon shone kindly over the mountain top at the farther end of the lake, and the waves plashed softly on the pebbles at their feet, as Florence sat there with her head resting on Harold's shoulder, dreaming the sweetest dream of life.

CHAPTER XII.

UNREST.

The sun was streaming through the Sanderson's library window, and the curtains were fluttering in the soft lake breeze which blew through the open casement. Across the driveway a policeman was chatting with a trim nursery maid, and two or three loungers were leaning over the sea wall, watching the blue water splash lazily against the grey stones. The white sails of the lake craft in the offing glistened in the sunshine, and the smoke from the steamers settled along the horizon in long black streaks, while the passing of an occasional vehicle along the driveway produced a little cloud of dust, which for a moment obscured the view, and then was carried away by the summer breeze and scattered along the roadway. The atmosphere had the hazy hue peculiar to one of those first warm days of early summer, when the air seems charged with lassitude, and one

is overpowered with a depressing sense of *ennui*, which precludes the possibility of any sort of action.

Marion Sanderson and Florence Moreland were there in the library, trying to keep cool and talking over the events of the past six months. Marion was stretched on a lounge with an Eau-de-Cologne bandage bound about her forehead to relieve the *migraine* from which she was suffering, and Florence sat beside her, plying a palm-leaf fan and trying to amuse her friend by accounts of the small doings of her life in New Hampshire.

"So you think I must have had a stupid winter," said Florence, in answer to Marion's last remark.

"I am sure of it. You had much better have remained here with me."

"You are very inconsistent," laughed Florence. "Last minute you said Chicago was the dullest place you knew anything about."

"I meant dull in comparison with London or New York. It is certainly better than a place where life is made up of prayer meetings and snow banks."

"I am glad you are beginning to appre-

ciate the advantages of your home," said Florence.

"Don't chaff me, Florence. I can't bear it. I am too nervous. I wish you had this headache for five minutes and perhaps you would feel sorrier for me."

"Why, my dear, I do feel sorry for you; isn't there anything I can do?"

"No; Dr. Maccanfrae is coming this morning and I suppose he will give me a lot of stuff, but it won't do me any good. I have taken every known medicine this winter, and I have had this headache every day for months. I can't eat anything. I can't sleep, and I am tired and bored all the time. The Doctor calls it neurasthenia, but I don't know what good it does to put such a big name to it, when he can't do me any good."

"There must be something that will help you," said Florence.

"Of course there is. If I could go somewhere else to live I know I should feel better. What I need is some new distraction, but how can I have that in this stupid town?" Then she was silent for awhile and during that time she thought of the

few days last winter when a new element had come into her life only to vanish as quickly again. She thought of a ball-room, an exciting dance, and the magnetic impulse of a moment which had made life seem so sweet. Why had she resisted that temptation, she asked herself. The other course could not have made her more unhappy, and it, at least, was no more a mockery than her present life, with that love still burning fiercely to the wild accompaniment of Tzigan strains, echoing in her heart. "What is the use of being good?" she asked herself. Then she smiled a mocking answer, turned over on the lounge and buried her face in the cushions.

Florence watched Marion anxiously for a moment. She was extremely worried about the state of nervous depression in which she had found her friend on returning to Chicago, and she was trying to think of some way in which she could help her. She leaned over her and slowly stroked her rich black hair. Marion looked up and smiled faintly. Then she seized Florence's hand and began to sob nervously. "You love me, don't you Flor-

ence; you love me, don't you?" she said between the sobs.

"You don't need to ask that, Marion."

"I know it," she replied; "I think you are the only person in the world who understands me, the only person who loves me."

"You are wrong in that, my dear, I am sure."

"No, I am not," she moaned. "I want love, I must have love. O, I can't live without it!"

Florence stroked Marion's head again, and tried to soothe her hysterical sobbing. "Dear," she said softly," there is one man who would die for you if it would bring you happiness. I am sure of it."

Marion turned her head away and did not reply. Florence felt pity for her friend's unhappy state of mind, which she considered was, in a great measure, self-produced, but she knew it was useless to talk to Marion about her husband, as she was a woman who could not be influenced by persuasive words. Florence wanted to help her friend to understand the danger she was in, but she could not see a way which promised success; so,

thinking that the best course was to divert her mind from herself, she took Marion's hand and said cheerfully, "I have a secret to tell you, dear, but you must sit up and look pleased."

"I hope it is interesting," said Marion somewhat mournfully. "I haven't heard a secret for months."

"Guess what it is."

"Is it an engagement?"

"Yes."

"Whose?"

"Guess."

"I can't. You must tell me immediately. I am dying to know," answered Marion, brightening considerably.

"It is mine."

"You horrid creature," said Marion, sitting up and hurling one of the sofa cushions at Florence.

"That is a novel way to treat a friend at such a time," Florence said as she dodged the pillow.

"You are an awful girl not to tell me before. How could you be in the house since yesterday and not say anything? I suppose

Harold Wainwright is the man, but I don't much care who he is. You are a provoking creature," and she emphasized her remarks by throwing another cushion which hit wide of the mark, and sent some books spinning off the library table onto the floor.

Marion was over her depression now, and, jumping up, she threw her arms about Florence and kissed her, saying: "Sit down, dear, and tell me all about it. When did it happen? When is it going to be announced? When are you going to be married? I always felt you would marry him. Who are you going to have for bridesmaids?"

Florence laughed at Marion's multitude of questions. "You dear girl," she said, kissing her, "I am glad I made you smile again; but I can answer only one of those questions. It happened last Sunday at Fairville."

"And you didn't tell me until now! O, I will pay you up for this. But come, let's talk it all over and decide about the wedding and the bridesmaids."

A servant entered the room and announced "Dr. Maccanfrae." Marion and Florence hurriedly assumed different positions and ad-

justed their ruffled hair. Then the kind face of the philanthropic physician appeared in the doorway.

"How do I find my patient this morning?" said the Doctor, coming toward the window where they were seated.

"Better, I hope," said Florence, turning round.

"Miss Moreland!" exclaimed the Doctor in astonishment. "I thought you were somewhere in the White Mountains."

"No; I came back yesterday," she continued as he shook her hand. "I thought you needed a nurse for your patient."

"Nurse and remedy combined, for you are the best cure I could prescribe for Mrs. Sanderson."

"You are very flattering, Doctor. Under your advice I shall try to do my best, but, if you will excuse me, I shall run away and do some unpacking." Saying this, Florence left her seat, and, bidding the Doctor good-by, walked toward the door. As she was leaving the room she called to him, asking when he would give her another lecture on pantheism.

"I fear if I do I shall have to suffer for

the sin of corrupting the heart of a Puritan," said the Doctor.

"A Puritan is always fortified against Satan's wiles," she answered laughingly, as she stopped in the doorway," and, besides, my grandfathers, for six generations, were ministers."

"A case of the transmission of the original sin, I suppose," answered the Doctor, as she retired through the door. "And how is my patient to-day?" he repeated, as Florence's laughter died away and her steps were heard hurrying up the stairs.

"I don't think I am a bit better," said Marion somewhat mournfully, having relapsed into her former state in the presence of the Doctor. After adjusting the cloth on her aching head, she continued: "I have no animation or ambition; I have these frightful nervous pains and headaches; my appetite is all gone; nothing seems to amuse me any more, and I lie here all day long feeling utterly wretched. In the evening I manage to develop animation enough to take me out, and, for a while, I forget myself, but when it is over I feel worse than ever. Oh, Doctor, what is the matter with me?"

Dr. Maccanfrae looked at Marion a moment as though hesitating to answer her question, then, feeling her pulse, he replied: "Mrs. Sanderson, there is nothing the matter with you."

"What do you mean, Doctor?" said Marion somewhat angrily. "Do you suppose I don't know how I feel?"

"When I say there is nothing the matter with you, I mean you have no organic disease. You are simply suffering from the fashionable complaint of nervous depression, or neurasthenia, as we physicians call it. Almost every woman in your station in life has it sooner or later. It is nothing but a symptom, but it may grow into a great many worse things."

"Well, why don't you cure me then, if it is nothing?" remarked Marion in a provoked manner."

The Doctor looked at her a moment; then he asked slowly, but with an emphasis which seemed to carry a hidden meaning: "Do you want to get well, Mrs. Sanderson?"

Marion looked up somewhat startled. "Why do you ask such a question?" she replied.

"Because you produced the disease yourself, and you alone can cure it."

"You are positively rude, Doctor.

"I know I should ask pardon for my brusqueness, but I am your physician, and I desire to see you well again. The only way that can be accomplished is for you to take the case in your own hands."

"I don't understand, Doctor."

"I take a sincere interest in you and your husband. If you will let me talk to you as a friend, and will take my advice, I hope I may do you much good; but if I am to remain the physician and must confine myself to writing prescriptions for worthless drugs, I fear the improvement will be slow."

"Go on, Doctor. I promise to listen," said Marion, prompted more by a curiosity to hear his advice than by a resolution to follow it.

"I may say some very plain things. Will you promise to take them in the friendly way in which they are meant?"

"Go on, Doctor. I shall not get angry, I promise you."

The Doctor leaned forward and said, in a more sympathetic manner: "Mrs. Sanderson,

every physician whose patients are drawn from the classes we call society has to deal with scores of cases precisely like yours. One of us will administer bromides; another will feed his patients on extract of beef; another will use electricity; another will recommend massage, and so on. But all these remedies are fruitless except in so far as they assist the sufferer to believe that she is improving, or afford some temporary relief. The disease, if so I may term a depressed state of the nervous system, is caused by the habits of the patient, and can only be cured by changing those habits."

"I am not dissipated," said Marion somewhat resentfully.

"I did not say that, Mrs. Sanderson, but if you desire to get well you must completely change your mode of life."

"What must I do?"

"I fear you will only laugh when I tell you, and call me a silly old fool."

"No, I sha'n't; I promise."

"You must go to bed before eleven every night. You must be up by half-past seven. You must walk or ride every morning, drink

no wine, tea, or coffee, eat plain food, and read no novels. You must develop an interest in your household affairs, get a wholesome occupation for every hour of the day, and take no more medicine. When you feel a headache go into the fresh air; when you feel depressed, throw the mood off by finding some work to do."

"But, Doctor, I had almost sooner die than do all that. I could never live in such a routine of the commonplace."

"I know that is very hard, but perhaps it is not all," said the Doctor. "You have no children, Mrs. Sanderson."

"No, thank heaven. I am worried enough without that."

"Unfortunately we are confronted in this world with a certain amount of worry. I think experience proves that it is better to accept the worries nature intended than to create worse ones by trying to circumvent her. However, I see you weary of my preaching. Think it over until Monday, and then I shall give you some more advice provided you think your nerves can bear it."

"You are just as bad as Dr. Thompson."

"Only I have no choir boys and spring bonnets to attract an audience," replied the Doctor, rising to leave. Then he continued in a different tone: "I trust you will pardon what I have said, and even if you don't follow my disagreeable *régime*, I want you to feel that I gave you the best advice that I could."

The Doctor bade her good-by, and when he was gone she buried her face in the pillows and thought over what he had said. "I never could do all that," she thought; "besides, he is a perfect crank on fresh air and diet. If I thought Roswell would let me, I would go to someone else. I think he is too old to be up with the times, and Mrs. Smythe says Dr. Wimbleton is a perfect dear and helped her from the first day she went to him. O, my poor head, how it does ache!" she called out, half expecting sympathy from the oak book-shelves and the bric-a-brac; then she turned over nervously and continued her restless thinking. "I wish I were dead," she moaned. "So little comes into my life that living it is scarcely worth the trouble. If there were only someone to bring me sympathy. If I could only forget those days

when, for a few moments, I felt as other women feel."

Florence came into the room again and Marion, hearing her step, looked up. "Is it you?" she said.

"Yes," answered Florence; "I heard the Doctor go out so I thought I would come back. What did he say?"

"O, a lot of nonsense which I really did not listen to. He ought to do more to cure me and talk less. In fact, I think his personality exasperates me, and I am afraid I shall have to change physicians if I want to get any better."

"Poor Dr. Maccanfrae," said Florence. "He is the dearest, kindest, best intentioned man in the world. Think of the good he does among the poor."

"O, I know all about that, but that's no reason why he should lecture me like a child about going to bed early and taking exercise."

"Perhaps he believes more in such medicine than in drugs. Don't you think yourself that it is some such *régime* that you need?"

"Don't you begin to lecture me, too," said

Marion, with a sigh. "Life is hard enough without your making it worse."

"I shall not lecture you, I promise, but," she continued, taking Marion's hands and pulling her up from the lounge, "as your nurse, I must see that you have a change. Come, tell me what are the plans for to-day."

"Why, there's the luncheon at Mrs. Ryder's."

"Good, and what else?"

"Why, we dine at the Beemers' to-night."

"And to-morrow?"

"We go to the races on Walter Sedger's drag, and dine at the Washington Park Club."

"Is your husband going?"

"Of course."

"How does he leave his business?"

"I make him."

"Very well, then this morning before luncheon we take a walk as far as Lincoln Park."

"I can't walk that far, Florence."

"You are going to walk that far," said Florence, authoritatively. "I am your nurse, and I insist upon it."

"But I shall be ill all day."

"Never mind, you will get over it this

afternoon when we read some Thackeray, and to-morrow morning you and I will do the marketing."

"You are crazy, Florence, I do believe."

"I never was more sane in my life. Come, I am in earnest. You would have me here, you know, and I shall make myself so disagreeable that you will be thankful when I am gone."

"O, Florence, how can you be so rough?" said Marion, as Florence dragged her toward the door.

"There, now," said Florence, after they had passed into the hall, "go and put on your hat. I brought mine with me."

"Just think of the heat, Florence," said Marion as she disappeared up the stairs.

In a few minutes Marion returned looking brighter already, Florence thought, and the two women were soon strolling along the lake shore talking over the countless trivialities women find to talk about, and at tea-time, after a day of Florence's nursing, Marion was forced to admit that she had passed an unusually cheerful day. Roswell Sanderson came in just as they were finishing tea, and

after taking a seat and declining a cup of the beverage, he said in a careless manner: "By the way, Marion, an old friend of yours came into the bank just before I left."

"Who?" asked Marion.

"That New Yorker, Duncan Grahame."

Marion felt a sudden sinking in her heart and was conscious that the color was fading from her cheeks, but she took a large swallow of tea and tried to look unconcerned. Florence watched Roswell's face closely and saw the same expression come into his eyes which she had noticed that afternoon at the Renaissance Club tea.

"When did he come?" asked Marion, after a moment.

"This morning on the 'Limited'. He has been in England all winter. You will see him to-morrow, as he told me Sedger had asked him on his coach."

"What fate has brought him back again?" thought Marion.

Roswell Sanderson was silent for a moment, then he came toward his wife. Taking a seat beside her, he asked tenderly if she remembered what day it was; then he took a pack-

age from his pocket which he dropped into her lap.

"Why, it's the anniversary of our wedding. I had quite forgotten it."

Florence had left the room a moment before, so that they were alone. Marion untied the parcel in her lap, and found that it was a case containing a string of pearls. She looked up into her husband's face and kissed him, and a feeling of shame came into her heart. She saw a love in his eyes which she could not return, and she prayed that he might find the means to make her love him. This thought was in her heart only for a moment, then she was playing with the pearls, and wondering again why Duncan had come back into her life.

CHAPTER XIII.

DERBY DAY.

A small crowd was collected in front of the Hotel Mazarin, and its proportions were gradually being swelled by passing Saturday loungers. Walter Sedger's drag, drawn up in front of the hotel to receive his party for the races, was the attraction which drew together this inquisitive throng, and in spite of the expression of superior indifference assumed by most of the men and boys composing the crowd, it was easy to see that the red-wheeled coach, with its smart team of browns, was an object of more than passing interest. A park policeman was exchanging a word or two in a knowing manner with the stolid Briton in boots and breeches at the leaders' heads, and near him a slouch-hatted veteran, wearing a Grand Army badge, was talking condescendingly with an ice-man. A large cake of ice, which had been carried thus far on its way to the hotel bar, was

slowly melting in the sun, and little streams of water flowed from it and trickled into the gutter; but the veteran and the ice-man still gazed at the shining panels of the drag, and eyed the "cattle" with the air of connoisseurs, while a butcher's boy with his white apron and basket of meat, and a German carpenter with his kit of tools, stood there stolidly, intent upon remaining until the show was over. A diminutive Italian boot-black, still attired in the rags of his native Naples, had crowded to the curb and was standing in front of two Norwegian sailors; just behind them was a party of Bohemian laborers, and a peddler from sunny Sicily touched elbows with a mortar-covered mason from Erin's shores, while some cadaverous clerks from the State Street shops, radiant in the ready-made attire of assumed gentility, were there, helping to swell this crowd of perhaps a hundred loungers. They were all citizen of the great Republic, and though few could speak intelligently the language of their adopted home, probably most of them, in their hearts, resented the appearance on the Chicago streets of this English coach as something un-

American, for which "them doods" on the Avenue were responsible.

The hands of the hotel clock indicated that the hour was nearing two. The thin-faced veteran in the slouch hat plunged his hands deeper into his trousers' pockets, and, turning his head to a critical angle, said patronizingly to the ice-man: "Them's the things they calls 'tally-ho's.'" The ice-man rolled his shirt-sleeves a little higher above his elbows, folded his brawny arms and replied, in the accent of the Teuton, "I dink dot vas it."

"Them swells likes to show off mighty well. Wonder what that machine cost," answered the veteran. But before the ice-man could reply, a messenger boy at his side shouted out, "Golly! there goes another of them 'busses," and the attention of the crowd was attracted toward the street, where Jack Elliot's coach, with its team of roans, was passing along the Avenue, bearing a party to the races.

"I wish that chap in the white pants'd toot his horn," said the messenger boy; but Jack Elliot was a coaching man who did not

believe in arousing the neighborhood with useless music, so the wish was not gratified.

While the attention of the crowd was thus diverted, Sedger and his friends emerged from the hotel. The party was composed of Marion and her husband, Florence Moreland, Harold Wainwright, a Mrs. Smith from Cincinnati, and Walter Sedger. They had been lunching in the restaurant of the hotel, and on reaching the sidewalk they at first found some difficulty in pushing their way toward the coach; but on seeing them the smart park policeman on duty officiously pushed the crowd back and made a way for them.

"I can't wait for Grahame any longer," Sedger was saying to Mrs. Sanderson. "He couldn't lunch with us, and I told him to be here at half-past one. It's a quarter to two, and we shall miss the first race."

"Don't wait for him, then," said Marion, thinking this was the only thing to be said, but feeling an inward disappointment at the thought that Duncan might not see her in her white crepon gown, with its gold corselet and braided trimmings, just sent her by Mrs. Mason of Burlington Street, London, W.

She knew it was becoming, and she also liked her Virot hat, but she didn't think it wise to put Sedger in an ill-humor by asking him to wait, so she walked silently to where a groom was holding a ladder against the box-seat. Meanwhile Sedger passed round to his off side wheeler and picked up his reins. Assorting them in correct road fashion he mounted to his seat, wrapped a light driving apron about his legs, picked up his whip, caught the lash in a double thong, and waited while his party took their places. Marion mounted to the box seat and the rest took the longer seat behind. Just as Sedger was about to start his team, Marion, who had been constantly looking in the direction in which Duncan should appear, saw him hastening around the corner of Jackson Street. "There is Mr. Grahame," she called out, and while Duncan was hurrying along the street, Roswell Sanderson suggested that he and Wainwright had better change to the back seat, so as to give Duncan an opportunity of seeing something of the city.

Duncan came up almost breathless from his rapid walking, and after exchanging a

hurried greeting with the party, mounted to the seat beside Florence left vacant by Harold Wainwright. "Let 'em go," Sedger called to the grooms. The lead bars rattled, the leaders pranced as the grooms jumped from their heads, the wheelers sprang into their collars, and the coach rolled off down the Avenue.

It was a bright June day, and all Chicago seemed to be in the long, tree-lined boulevard which stretched away to the south. Hundreds of vehicles of every description known to the coach-builder's craft were rolling over the hard macadam pavement, bearing people to the races, and in this motley array were to be found all sorts and conditions of men and carriages. Buggies and express wagons, stanhopes and butcher carts, mail-phaetons and road-carts, char-à-bancs and extension tops, victorias and "hacks," coaches and omnibuses, aristocracy and democracy scattered the same dust and rolled toward the same goal. Only the road to Epsom can present a scene more varied than this; only the Champs Élysées excels the noble avenue down which Walter Sedger tooled his team of browns.

"It is a pleasure to live on such a day,

with four such horses to drive behind, isn't it, Mr. Grahame?" asked Florence, as the coach rolled past the Auditorium, and the team settled down to their work.

"I am surprised you think so," answered Duncan, with a bantering expression in his eyes.

"Why?"

"Because I don't see how you reconcile so Anglican an institution as a drag with your patriotic sentiments."

"You forget that George Washington hunted, and had his clothes made in London."

"Then I am to infer that the highest type of patriot is he who rides to hounds and gets his coats on Hanover or Conduit Street."

"You are to infer that the highest type of patriot is not he who blusters sectional prejudice from under the shade of a slouch hat, but he who is sufficiently liberal to combine foreign excellencies with native virtues."

"You have a flow of expression which would do credit to a campaign orator," laughed Duncan. "For my part I don't believe in patriotism, at least in the sentimental sense of the word. Patriotism is a compound of pride

and jealousy. Eliminate these two factors, to use an algebraic expression, and nothing remains."

"I fear we shall never agree on such questions," said Florence, anxious not to enter into a useless argument with Duncan.

"Perhaps, after all, it is my fault," answered Duncan with an expression of sadness in his eyes which seemed strange to Florence. "I wish I might believe in noble sentiment, but a man who has had his wings clipped in Wall Street is not the chap for sentiment."

"Perhaps you will change your mind one day," answered Florence.

"It would only take one example of true sentiment to convert me," said Duncan gravely. "Well," he added, after a moment, "there may be rough spots in a worldly life, but there is no dullness, and, after all, that is what most of us try to avoid. While the sparkle lasts life is sweet, but when it is gone one might as well give up the fight."

Mrs. Smith of Cincinnati interrupted them by asking Florence if she knew what the large, brick building on the left was.

"That is the Calumet Club," Florence an-

swered, and then they subsided, for a moment, into silence.

Approaching Grand Boulevard the crowd of vehicles became denser, and the coaching party found much to amuse them. Sedger pointed his leaders around the corner of Thirty-fifth Street, and the coach swayed and rocked as the four browns dashed around the turn into the short cross-street. The horn was sounded to warn the street cars of their approach, and then, after a passing glance of horses, coach, and party, reflected in the broad shop windows of the street, another corner was turned, and they were rolling along the broad boulevard leading to Washington Park. Sedger was late, and, anxious to be in time for the first race, he sent his lash under the lead bars, and touched the off leader a clip on the legs which made him jump into his collar in quick order. The team all caught the inspiration of the lash, the pace was quickened, and the great vehicle rumbled on past the small fry of the road, quickly measuring off the two miles or more of straight avenue stretching away toward the park. The party on the drag laughed and talked, and occasion-

ally glanced at the quickly changing scene. Soon the coach was rolling past the great, green meadow of the park so English in its aspect, and then, after passing a bit of lake where hundreds of holiday seekers were now stretched in the cool shade of the shrubs on its banks, rattled down the little incline which leads to the Club House road. The strains of band-music came over the bit of level ground and the party could see the great Grand Stand crowded with its ten thousand spectators. By its side was the Club House, standing on a rise of ground skirted by lawns and flower-beds, its two verandas filled with people, and the driveway in front crowded with arriving vehicles.

Sedger urged his team to a gallop, and the horses scampered through the lodge-gate and up the little hill to the Club House, where he brought them up "all standing." The people on the veranda crowded forward to see the coaching party, while Sedger and his guests descended, and the coachman drove the steaming horses off to the stables. Scores of smart traps followed the drag up to the club steps, and the party stopped a moment

to view the brilliant scene. Sleek horses and polished brass, neat liveries and shining panels, bright gowns and gay parasols, moved in seemingly endless succession to the accompanying music of champing bits and the restless pawing of countless hoofs. After watching the changing throng for a moment, Sedger and his party walked through the Club House to the veranda facing the course, which they found filled with members and their friends. On the enclosed lawn before them people were sitting in chairs, or walking up and down. Considering this the best place to view the sport, they placed seats on the green turf and sat down in the shade of the Club House.

"A capital course this," said Duncan to Marion, as he glanced across the turf-covered enclosure filled with smartly dressed people to the track beyond, where a half dozen racers were taking their preliminary gallop. "I had no idea you had such a place as this in Chicago," he added, and then Sedger suggested that they go to the betting ring and see how the betting was.

"Wait till after this race," put in Wain-

wright. "There go the horses to the post."

"Well, if we can't play this race, we must have a hat pool," answered Sedger, who felt that not to have something on a race was to lose half the sport. "Let's see, there are just seven horses and seven of our party. Five dollars apiece for a flyer."

No one objected, so Sedger wrote the seven numbers on little pieces of paper which he tore off his programme, and, shaking them up in his hat, he passed them about among his party.

"What horse have you, Mrs. Sanderson?" asked Duncan as she drew her number from the hat.

"Number seven," answered Marion, and Duncan looked at his card to see what horse it was. "Orion," he said, "and his colors are purple and white."

"My husband's university colors; that ought to bring me luck."

"Not on Orion, I am afraid," interrupted Sedger, who prided himself on his knowledge of the turf. "He was a 'twenty-to-one shot' in town last night, but I'll be generous and give you two dollars for him."

"No, I prefer to keep him. Orion may prove a lucky star after all."

"By Jove, they're off!" shouted Duncan, who had been watching the horses at the post on the other side of the course. They were all well bunched, the red flag dropped, and away they scampered on a five-furlong dash.

"Orion's last, Mrs. Sanderson," called Sedger, who was following the race with a large pair of russet-leathered field-glasses. "Orion's last, but I'll give you a dollar for your chance."

"Don't take it, Mrs. Sanderson, he's coming up," said Duncan, as the horses dashed around the first turn, scattering a cloud of dust behind them. Then the crowd in front of the Grand Stand began to surge and sway, and the sea of ten thousand hats was lashed to excitement. A murmur broke forth from the distant crowd as a mass of color and racers emerged from the dust and rushed down the home stretch; then the cheering grew louder and the hats swayed more furiously as the horses dashed on to the finish.

"Look at Orion now," said Duncan, "he's a good second. By Jove, he wins!" he

shouted, as the purple and white rushed to the front and won hands down by a neck. "I congratulate you, Mrs. Sanderson."

"Who would have thought the brute could beat 'The Wizard' who sold at two to one on" said Sedger, and then he suggested that the men should go to the betting ring and play the Derby.

Duncan turned to Marion and asked if she would not choose him a horse to play. "You are so lucky that I feel sure of winning," he added.

"But I know nothing about the horses," remonstrated Marion.

"Neither do I, so we have a fair chance."

"Well, I choose Belle of Newport."

"You think she ought to be fast, I suppose."

"No, but the Marquis, who, Mr. Sedger says, is a favorite, will be sure to follow her."

"Don't you play the Belle, Grahame," said Sedger, as he and Duncan left the ladies and wandered toward the Grand Stand. "Her owner told me last night that he is afraid she isn't fit."

"Perhaps he intends playing her himself," laughed Duncan.

Sedger and Duncan passed over the bridge connecting the Club House lawn with the Grand Stand, and were soon in the midst of the great crowd moving toward the betting-rooms. The sun beat down upon the heads of this army of enthusiasts, but, despite the heat, thousands of men crowded into the low room where scores of keen book-makers, with their coats off, were ranged in little booths, calling off the odds on the next race, and taking the money of the eager crowd of gamblers. By the time Sedger and Duncan had worked their way through this throng up to a book-maker, and had purchased two tickets on Marquis and Belle of Newport respectively, they were thankful to hurry out of the stifling place into the open air.

"I took your advice, Mrs. Sanderson," said Duncan, after he had returned to the club lawn. "Belle of Newport is my horse."

"I hope my choice won't bring you ill luck."

"We shall soon know, for there go the horses to the post."

Five of the starters trotted past the Club House, and there was a perceptible movement among the people on the veranda and lawn

as the contestants for the great event passed before them. The Marquis was the favorite and he was greeted by a round of applause, as Jockey Gannon urged him into a brisk hand gallop. The sleek sides of the chestnut gelding glistened in the sunshine, and he certainly looked a winner. Close at his heels was the bay Kentucky filly, Belle of Newport, ridden by the veteran Forest, and the knowing ones could see that the Southern mare was in prime condition. The first horses were followed by three stragglers who had been late in saddling, and then the starter's carriage rolled across the green turf of the field toward the half-mile post at the opposite side of the course. Hundreds of glasses were leveled at the bunch of racers over by the stables, restlessly tugging at their bits. Then there was a scramble and a rush of horses past the red flag, but one horse was slow in getting away and the flag still fluttered in the breeze. The jockeys pulled up their mounts and turned them back to the starting-post. After much manœuvring for positions, they scrambled away again, scattering the dust behind them. They were well bunched, the red flag dropped,

and away they went on the mile and a half gallop for the American Derby. The crowd surged wildly and eager eyes were strained toward the mass of horses scampering over the first half-mile of the course.

Down they came to the Grand Stand, a cloud of dust enveloping them and almost concealing the bright colors of the riders. Men rushed to the railings and strained their eyes down the course; a faint murmur broke from the crowd and grew louder and louder. "Marquis! Marquis wins!" was shouted by the favorite's friends, as they saw the long stride of the chestnut gelding in front. Then the racers clattered past the Grand Stand, urged on by cheers and applause.

It was nobody's race yet, but Marquis still led, with Belle of Newport a good second. They passed the Club House with Marquis close to the inside railing for the turn, when he swerved against the railing and stumbled. There was a shout of horror, and the women at the Club House turned their heads away. The racers rushed on to the finish, but the favorite lay there in the dust, with the blood gushing from a broken knee, and Jockey Gan-

non motionless at his side. Some men ran on to the course and carried Gannon away. The poor Marquis tried to rise and looked pleadingly at his owner who had rushed to his side. From the distance came a cheer. It was for the Belle of Newport, the winner of the great race. Jockey Forest had seen the Marquis go down before him, and pressing his knees to the sides of the Belle, had raised the filly and carried her over the fallen favorite. The other riders had seen the accident in time, and, swerving their mounts aside, they had rushed on to the finish, while the Marquis lay there in the dust pleading for help with his mournful eyes. A veterinary bent over the horse's wound. He held a hurried consultation with the owner; then some one placed a revolver against the poor beast's head; there was a loud report, a convulsive kick, and the noble racer lay dead on the field he had striven so hard to win. A pair of work-horses was brought on to the course and all that remained of the Marquis was dragged away, while over by the little lake, under the shade of an elm, Jockey Gannon lay stretched on the turf. A physician

was by his side, and a crowd of curious people gazed at the pale face before them. "He may live till morning," the physician said, and then the wounded jockey was silently borne away. The band played again,. the blood stains on the course were covered by fresh dirt, and the bell rang for the next race. People asked a few questions about the dying man, and then he was forgotten in the excitement of the sport. It was only a jockey.

"You see, you brought me luck, Mrs. Sanderson," Duncan said to Marion, after he had returned from getting his Belle of Newport ticket cashed. "Two hundred dollars for forty. That is luck, isn't it?"

"Yes, but that reminds me of the accident. Do you know, I feel quite unnerved after that sight."

"You had better walk with me on the lawn. It will do you good, I am sure."

"I hope so," said Marion as she rose to go with him.

For perhaps a quarter of an hour they walked up and down the lawn, chatting away unconcernedly about the people around them. It was the first time they had been

alone together since Duncan's return, but he made not the slightest reference to their last meeting. He was careless and unconcerned, and Marion tried to appear the same, but there was a strange feeling in her heart, half of fear and half of resentment, which told her that indifference had no place there. She laughed and chatted, but waited anxiously, thankful that so many people were there, but hopeful that he might say something to tell her that he remembered the words he had spoken at the Patricians' ball.

Suddenly Duncan stopped at a secluded part of the lawn where there was an empty bench. "Let us sit down here in the shade. You must be tired," he said, and then, after they had taken seats, a moment of silence came, and Marion could feel that Duncan was looking into her face, but she did not dare to meet his glance. He leaned toward her and spoke in the soft tones she remembered so well. "You are cruel," he said.

She looked up, startled. "Cruel, what do you mean?" she asked.

"You are cruel to forget so easily. You are cruel to treat me as you have."

"I, cruel; I don't understand," she said, and she thought of his careless manner and how she had waited for him to speak.

"Yes, you women are all alike. You play with us men for the moment, and then we are cast aside like a toy which no longer pleases. I thought you were different from the rest."

Marion looked up into his face with an expression of astonishment. She met his grey eyes, and for a moment she felt again that subtle power she had been dreaming of so long.

"Have you forgotten?" he said slowly.

Marion turned her head away. "Don't talk of that, Mr. Grahame," she answered. "That is all ended."

"It can't be ended while——" He did not finish for he saw a man approaching. "Here we are, Sanderson," he called carelessly. I suppose you are looking for your wife."

"Yes," answered Roswell, coming nearer. "Mr. Sedger has tea ready on the upper veranda, and he wants his party. You look pale, Marion, is anything the matter?"

"I felt very much upset by that accident.

I came here to get away from the people for a moment."

"A cup of tea will put you right," said Duncan.

CHAPTER XIV.

DANGER.

The races were over, and the rays of the setting sun streamed through the western window of the little dining-room where Walter Sedger's party was seated. The glass and plate glistened in the fading sunlight, and cast many deep shadows on the white table cover, while the faces of the people sitting there were flushed with the first glow of the approaching twilight. The servants moved quietly from place to place, and the merry conversation of Sedger's friends mingled with the soft strains of a Viennese waltz coming through the open hallway door. The thousands who had crowded the course that day had rumbled back over the dusty roads to the city. The huge Grand Stand was silent and deserted, and only the few parties dining at the club remained of the great crowd that had cheered Belle of Newport in her Derby victory. The refreshing cool of the evening

seemed to inspire the tired people with new spirits, and the addition to their number of Jack Elliot and his coaching party supplied the zest of variety, while the tales of a clever *raconteur* produced peals of merry laughter and called forth the utmost efforts of the staid French waiters to preserve their habitual immobility of countenance.

When the dinner was over and the party had removed to the veranda for coffee and cigars, each person there had forgotten, for the moment, all the cares of life, and was lost in the delightful joy of living. Exception must, however, be made of Marion, for, although the society of others usually enabled her to cast aside the depressing influences which often afflicted her, on this occasion she was unusually silent, and had been quite unresponsive to the loquacious efforts exerted by the grain broker on her right to arouse her interest. She now sat a little removed from the rest and gazed moodily out over the deserted race-course, thinking over the events of the past few months, and wondering, in a dazed sort of way, what the outcome would be. The men had gathered to-

gether and were discussing sport, while the women talked animatedly about a certain Mrs. Johnson whose actions had lately been disapproved of in certain quarters, so Marion was permitted to follow the current of her fancies undisturbed.

It was just dark enough for the freshly lighted cigars to glow in the fading light. With the setting of the sun had come the silence evening casts over a busy city, and except the occasional croaking of a frog in the Club House lake, or the distant whistle of a locomotive, there was no sound to break the evening quiet. Away over by the long row of red-roofed stables a pair of work-horses were slowly dragging a harrow over the deserted race-course, and they and the laborer trudging behind them were the only evidences of life which Marion could see. The last sun-gleam left the sky, but a fading tinge of light still rested upon the clouds. Marion watched it for a moment,—then it was gone. It seemed to her like a life which fades slowly into oblivion. She often thought of the unseen, and tried, occasionally, to form some life theory which seemed rational. To-

night, in the stillness which came after the bustle of the day, she felt singularly alone. She looked up into the impenetrable darkness and to her fancy the world seemed a frightful pit of blackness with a mass of living creatures at the bottom,—writhing in misery and gasping for a breath of happiness. And God? An awful monster at the pit's mouth, baiting the distorted souls with pestilence or dangling hopes before their burning eyes, only to mock their struggles and let them sink down! down! down! Death comes to one sufferer, and then, with a gloating laugh, the monster drops another life into the pit to let it writhe in its awful misery. Marion shuddered at her fancy, and glanced up as if expecting to see the monster's eyes gleaming at the pit's mouth. The thought was horrible, and she covered her eyes with her hands to shut out her distorted imaginations, asking herself if there was no power strong enough to drive away the spirit of gloom which beset her, and make her pulses beat with joy. Deep in her heart she felt there was such a power, but it troubled her to think of it.

"Mrs. Sanderson." She looked up, startled,

and saw Duncan by her side. "I thought you might like to walk on the other side of the veranda. It is delightfully cool there."

For a moment she hesitated. "What can be the harm?" she thought. "None" was the answer she gave her question, and then she followed Duncan to the northern side of the veranda where an arm of the building hid them from the others. The moon was rising and her soft light was shed upon the soughing trees, and the stretch of white roadway before them. It was one of those perfect nights of early summer when the vexatious spirits of the day seem lulled to sleep by the mild airs of heaven, and as Marion sat there looking out over the moonlit park, she wondered at the gruesome fancies which had filled her mind but a moment before.

"It is a joy to live on such a night as this," she said, after the moment of silence which followed their coming.

Duncan leaned toward her, and spoke in the deep, soft tones Marion remembered so well. "I feel," he said, "that heaven has sent us this peaceful night to show us that happiness can be a reality."

"It is fortunate that perfect happiness seldom comes," she replied; "the monotony of it would be unendurable."

"Do you think it would be monotonous always to love?" he asked.

"Not if it were possible," she answered after a moment of thought.

"I know it is possible," he said firmly.

"How?" she asked, looking up into his face.

His hand touched hers. "Because, when I look into your eyes, I feel a love which no power on earth could change." She let her hand remain in his, but she turned her face away. "How can I know this love is sincere?" she asked.

"By driving the cruel spirit out of your heart. You may send me away again as you did last winter, but I will come back, for, Marion, I love you, and I must have your love." Instinctively she started to her feet. Duncan was quickly by her side. His arm was about her, and she felt his lips against her cheek.

"I love you, my Marion," he whispered passionately; "you shall not leave me." For a moment she rested her head against his

breast and felt the embrace of his strong arms.

"If it were not a sin, Duncan," she said, looking up into his eyes, "I might love you."

"No love like ours can be a sin. It is heaven sent."

"If it only were," she sighed; then he drew her closer to him.

"It is, dearest," he said. "If you will listen to me, you will believe it, too."

"I must not listen to you, Duncan."

"Must I go away?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then I was foolish to fancy I could read love in your eyes."

"Don't torture me."

"I, torture? It is you who send me from you."

"I know it, but think of the danger we are in. Leave me to-night, Duncan. To-morrow Florence will be with Mr. Wainwright's aunt, and Roswell goes to St. Louis. Dine with me at eight, perhaps I can tell you then, but not to-night. I must have time to think."

"I will go now," he said, "but I will come to you to-morrow." He kissed her.

"God help me," she sighed.

Duncan quietly released her and they walked silently back toward the place where they had left the others. At the corner of the building they met Sedger. It was too dark for him to notice that Marion was agitated, and any possible suspicions were averted by Duncan's saying quietly, "Here we are. We had just started to join you. Is the drag ready?"

"Yes. I have been collecting the party. You are the last to be found. It's a capital night for a drive and I intend to take you back through Jackson Park."

"Splendid," said Marion. "I adore driving in the moonlight."

The party had left the veranda, and Marion and her companions walked to where they were waiting. They were obliged to descend the stairs to the hallway below, and by the time they reached the rendezvous she felt perfectly calm and collected. They were compelled to wait a moment for a missing wrap. Marion stood next to Duncan, and a wild sense of pleasure was in her heart. The fear had gone, and her love made her defiant. She felt that she might give him his answer then.

The missing wrap was found, and the party moved toward the door. As they passed out they could see the dark outlines of the drag looming up in the moonlight. The great coach lamps cast a flickering light upon the roadway and the horses champed impatiently at the bits. Sedger mounted to the box and this time Mrs. Smith had the seat beside him. A couple of Sedger's friends had been picked up at the club, so Marion said she would take the back seat. Duncan joined her there, and she was astonished to find her husband next her also.

The drag rolled away from the Club House, and swayed and rocked as Sedger let the horses gallop through the gates and along the little stretch of road leading to the park. The evening breeze blew softly against the faces of the party, and the coach rumbled along past the park lake, with the moonlight glistening on its surface, and the slender trees standing out grim and shadowy like huge phantoms guarding its banks. Then the team settled down to a steady pace, and through the dim light the leaders could just be seen huddling together, with their ears

pricked up for every sound. Horses seem to travel best at night, and the steady creaking of the harness, harmonizing with the rattle of the bars and the lively clatter of hoofs on the hard ground, came like sweet music through the night air. A leader shied at a shadow; the coach swayed for a moment, and the party crowded closer together. Some one started a college song; the refrain was caught up by the rest, and the chorus swelled forth a familiar glee. Along the tree-lined avenues or through winding roadways the great coach rolled. Now the leaders plunged into the dark shadows of the woods, or trotted merrily past some open meadow, while from the long coach-horn the notes of "Who'll buy a broom," sounded sharp and clear on the night air:

"For though the sound of the horn is dead,
And the guards are turned to clay,
There are those who remember the 'yard of tin,'
And the mail of the olden day."

Then, for a while, they sped along the shores of the great lake, and mingling with the rumbling of wheels came the splash of the waves upon the sandy shore.

The songs grew less frequent, the laughter ceased, and the party gradually lapsed into silence. A reckless daring, such as she had never known before, possessed Marion. In her imagination she seemed to be rolling on toward some dazzling goal, and she laughed at the thought of danger. The moon passed under a cloud and she felt the strong grasp of Duncan's hand about her own. She looked toward her husband and there was a cold, stony feeling in her heart. She was glad to feel that she had the courage to break from the trammels of convention which had so long bound her, and she felt a delightful sense of freedom which told her that at last the depths of her nature had been fathomed, and that the love lying there had burst forth in all its strength.

The coach left the park and rolled into the sleeping city. Down the long avenue it went, past rows of darkened houses. The cool breezes of the lake seemed warmed by the heated pavements, and the freedom of the country was lost in the narrow lines of streetway. Marion sat watching the two converging rows of flickering street lamps

stretching away as far as she could see, and down the street before her she saw the lamps of Jack Elliot's coach gleaming in the darkness. She remained lost in thought, and did not speak again until the brake rattled and the drag suddenly stopped.

Late that night Duncan sat in his room at the City Club. He was partly undressed and his clothes lay scattered about in heedless confusion. In his hand he held a glass of whiskey and soda, and between the occasional sips he passed over in his mind the events of the day. He thought also of the experiences of his life, and the women he had known came into his mind; women who had trusted and loved him while they formed the idle amusement of his hours; women who had felt his power for a while, only to see him turn away for some later fancy. He smiled as he thought of the words of love he had spoken to confiding hearts, but the smile brought a tinge of remorse for the harm he had done. He thought of Marion in a different light then, and a feeling of pity came into his heart which prompted him to curb his selfish nature and act in a generous way;

but the echo of a cruel laugh came to him, and in fancy he saw two mocking black eyes gleaming before him. "A man's a fool," he said aloud, "not to take what fortune sends him."

CHAPTER XV.

A GAME OF SKILL.

The seemingly interminable hours of the Sunday following the races passed slowly by. Marion spent the afternoon in her own room trying to think over the possibilities of the near future. Her heedless conduct had now brought her to a position which demanded resolute decision, and, surrounded as she was by a maze of temptations, she required to exercise the calmest judgment. A strong nature is able, at such times, to penetrate the future and select the wisest course, but it is far easier, and perhaps more natural, to drift aimlessly along, trusting to no other guide than fatuity. At moments a faint sense of fear feebly urged Marion to hold back, but wild fancies burned so impetuously in her heart that she was carried on past the point where she might have calmly considered the probable result of her conduct.

At last she was a woman, she thought, and

felt as other women did. After years passed in eking out a monotonous existence amid repellent surroundings she felt emancipated by the knowledge that she had found the love her nature craved. Now that Duncan had brought her this love should she refuse the gift and voluntarily return to the slavery in which she had lived so long? This was the question she asked herself. It would be transgressing the rules of society if she permitted herself to enjoy this love, but what difference did that make? For years she had been religiously obeying those rules, and her existence had been one of wretched discontent. Certainly the other course could not make her more unhappy, and, besides, she had seen women in other cities break loose from the bonds of convention and still maintain a standing in the world. In fact, they had been almost openly applauded for their action, and certainly had not suffered, socially, for their courage. After all, virtue was little else than fear, and it was only a weak nature that would permit itself to be coerced by the danger of discovery. In older places that danger had been modified by the liberality

of an advanced society, and as she had only the restricted provincialism of Chicago to fear, she felt a secret delight in defying the prudish gossips of the Knox Presbyterian Church. After all, she felt that she was clever enough to elude discovery, and relying on her discretion she permitted herself to dismiss fear from her heart as unworthy of a superior nature. It was by such reasoning as this that she forced her judgment to approve the promptings of her heart.

Marion watched the moments roll by. As the hour approached when she was to meet Duncan alone she felt calmer than she had at any time since their parting. At six o'clock she heard the brougham drive up to the door to take her husband to the station, and when he came into her room to bid her good-by, she calmly kissed him, congratulating herself that she had not betrayed the slightest agitation. All love for him was dead, she felt, and when he lingered for another embrace, she wondered that he could not see her heart was cold and unmoved. She smiled as he left. "Foolish fellow," she thought, "he has never known the true warmth of my heart so he

will be content with the cold effigy of love I give him." However, the words seemed very harsh, even to her, and she wondered if it really were she who had spoken them. Inspired by a curiosity to see if she had changed during the day, she looked at herself in the long mirror of her dressing-room and felt a secret pleasure in the thought that the image before her was that of a woman of the world to whom none of the experiences of life were strange. She thought her face showed more character, too, and she flattered herself that it would not be easy for anyone to read her thoughts in those deep, black eyes.

The little clock on her dressing-table struck half-past six, and she rang for her maid to dress her hair. After spending an hour-and-a-quarter at her toilet, she again arose and surveyed herself in the long mirror. Her pulses seemed, somehow, to be beating more rapidly now, and the calmness she had felt before was deserting her. The sense of fear came into her heart again, and even her conscience uttered a faint remonstrance at the step she was taking. She thought over all the chances of discovery and wondered whether there

was danger from the servants. Her cook and her butler were both French and, as they could speak but a few words of English, would say nothing; the footman and housemaids she had permitted to go out, and she felt that she could trust the discretion of her own maid. As for her neighbors, the people living next door were not of her set, and she drew a breath of relief on looking out of the window and finding that, owing to a cloudy sky, it was already nearly dark. Still she was far from calm, and, thinking she looked pale, she pinched her cheeks to bring color into them.

It was time for Duncan to arrive. Should she feign illness and send him away? She felt that it was too late for her to turn back now, and the thought of Duncan brought back memories which, for the moment, drove fear completely from her heart, and aroused the reckless spirit which had already carried her so far. She took a hasty glance at herself in the glass, gave a final touch to her hair, and hurried down the stairway to the little French room where she had been with Duncan on the afternoon of Mrs. McSeeney's tea. No

longer able to reason out excuses for her actions she abandoned herself to the contending fancies which filled her mind. She closed her eyes and fancied that she was being borne recklessly on toward a frightful precipice by some subtle force against whose power she was helpless. It seemed to her that she was being dashed down! down! Then she imagined that she saw the remains of her former self lying, bruised and shattered, at the bottom of the abyss before her. She grasped the chair-arms convulsively, then smiled at her childish fancies, yet deep down in her heart there was a feeling, growing stronger each moment, which urged her to turn back.

The door-bell rang. Marion could feel her heart beating with suppressed excitement, and it seemed an interminable time before the measured steps of François resounded on the hardwood floor. The door opened and Duncan entered. She could hear him taking off his coat in the hall, and she felt her brain whirling with the dizziness of confused emotions. The wheels of a carriage rumbled on the pavement outside and seemed

to stop before the door. What did it mean? Marion trembled at the thought that it might be some one coming to the house. Duncan took a step on the hall floor and then a key rattled in the front door. Her husband had returned. She could feel her pulses stop, and her limbs grow numb with fright. Duncan in the house, the hour, the dinner for two. What excuse could she make? The door slammed, and she heard her husband's voice in the hall. "Hello, Grahame," he said, "are you here? Just going, eh? Nonsense, stop and take pot-luck with us. I know my wife will be glad to have you. She expected to be alone."

Marion was saved. She could scarcely believe her senses; yet a sincere feeling of gratefulness to her husband came into her heart, and she drew a deep, free breath which brought the color back to her cheeks, and calmed her excited nerves. All her disturbed thoughts seemed quickly to vanish, and she felt as though she could hardly restrain herself from uttering a shout of joy. An hour before she would have felt resentment toward her husband, but the specious arguments with

which she had pardoned the wrong emotions of her heart seemed, somehow, to have fled, and she could realize the danger which had threatened her. Had she been left to meet Duncan alone, she might not have proved strong enough to resist his personality, but now she felt in her heart that the peril was passed.

Roswell and Duncan came into the room. "I missed my train," Roswell said, "so I thought I would come back and dine with you, my dear. I found Grahame in the hall and persuaded him to remain. I knew you would be glad to have him."

"Your husband is extremely kind, Mrs. Sanderson," said Duncan. "I expected to dine alone at the Club."

"Mr. Grahame is always welcome," smiled Marion, wondering what would be the outcome of this discordant dinner. She looked at her husband to see if his manner betrayed any excitement, but she could notice nothing unusual.

"You won't mind if I run away early, my dear, will you?" he said. "There is another train at half-past ten."

"I wish you wouldn't go to-night, dear," answered Marion.

"I must. The business is important."

Marion turned away thoughtfully, and found her eyes wandering toward Duncan. She noticed that his face wore an amused expression, as though the situation seemed laughable, and the matter were a huge joke. This carelessness provoked Marion, and she caught herself wondering why she felt unmoved in his presence. He was in evening dress, and she was amazed that her husband did not notice that, for an afternoon call, this was an anachronism.

After a few moments of desultory conversation, François appeared in the doorway. "Ze dinner ez served, Madame," he solemnly announced, and the little party moved silently toward the dining-room. As they crossed the hallway Marion could not help smiling at the strange turn affairs had taken. It seemed to her so like an amusing situation in some comedy, and she felt as though she were an actress going through with a part in a play which would, of course, end happily when the curtain was rung down on the last act.

The party filed slowly into the dining-room, and took their seats at the little, round table. A small candelabrum, placed in the centre of the cloth, supplied the only light, and the bright rays of the candles, falling on the white table-cover and shining plate, formed a cozy contrast to the oak-lined walls looming in the distance. Duncan sat on Marion's right, while her husband was placed on her left. During the silence which came as they took their places, Marion looked curiously at both men. Duncan took his seat with a satisfied air, and as he unfolded his napkin a careless smile came to his lips. In her husband's eyes she saw an expression of determination, and she thought it unusual and out of keeping with the genial manner in which he broke the silence by saying: "I consider it very lucky we trapped you into staying, Grahame. I have scarcely seen you since you arrived, and I would like to have a friendly chat before we come to that elevator business. I shall be back from St. Louis on Sunday and we can talk about the loan on Monday."

It was a surprise to Marion to learn that her husband and Duncan were evidently so

intimate. She thought they were scarcely acquainted.

"Any time will do me, Sanderson," answered Duncan, and then the party began to take their soup in silence. François poured out the sherry; Duncan took up his glass and drained it at one draught. As he put it down, he looked at Marion with an amused expression of triumph, then, glancing toward her husband, he shrugged his shoulders in a manner which conveyed contempt. Marion felt a sense of resentment toward Duncan for assuming such an attitude. His entire manner seemed to give the impression that he felt quite as much at home as the master of the house, and as the dinner progressed he treated her husband with the easy familiarity of one who felt the superiority of his position. Marion noticed that Roswell had never once changed the friendly tone of his manner, yet she could not help feeling that this extreme affability was, in some measure, assumed. The conversation was confined mainly to the two men, and Roswell seemed to lead it into channels where it was difficult for Duncan to follow, while the familiarity her husband

showed with the great questions of current interest was astonishing to Marion. She had spent so little time with him that she was unfamiliar with his tastes, and the keenness with which he argued, together with the delicate manner in which he seemed to lay bare Duncan's ignorance, surprised her greatly.

Marion was glad to be a listener, as it gave her time to think. She seemed to be seized now with a dispassionate calmness, which permitted her to view her actions in a way she had never done before. The subtle spell which had bound her to Duncan seemed fast breaking, and although scarce an hour before she had been ready to confess to him the full warmth of her love, she now appeared to be at a great distance from him and looking at the past as in the pages of some book. Again and again she glanced toward him and wondered why he seemed so changed. She observed that he was drinking too much wine, and when he occasionally raised his glass and cast an insinuating glance toward her, she felt the spirit of resentment grow stronger and stronger. She asked herself if his power of fascination had gone, and she confessed

that in the society of others, at least, he was not the same as when alone with her. Then she thought over the words which he had spoken to her, and how in his presence she had felt the subtle inspiration of a love which, it seemed to her, must burn forever. She looked up to see if she could feel the power his grey eyes had so often exerted over her, and she saw an angry blush come to his cheek. Roswell had called forth a confession of ignorance on a delicate point of finance. Duncan was clever, but he was not a deep student, and he often found himself at a loss for facts with which to substantiate his theories. He spoke a resentful word or two, and Marion thought it was unmanly for him to lose his temper.

The dinner wore on, and Marion found herself becoming more and more critical of Duncan's actions. She wondered if he were the man for whom, two hours before, she had been willing to venture everything. She began to analyze her feelings of the past six months, and she asked herself if the feeling he inspired was, after all, the love that her nature craved. Perhaps her doubts were

momentary and would vanish, leaving her again the prey of wild desires. Yet she felt that her nature could not be so vacillating. She looked at Duncan again to reassure herself. Was he her ideal? He leaned his elbows on the table and made a noise as he ate. She wondered why she had not noticed this before, for she abhorred carelessness of manners.

"So you think a leisure class is what we need in the West," Roswell was saying as François removed the plates after the game course. Marion had always felt this lack to be one of the evils of Western life, and she looked to Duncan for a defense of her theory.

"Yes," answered Duncan. "I favor a landed class who spend their money freely and devote their time to something beside grubbing for dollars."

"I quite agree with you," said Roswell. "We men in the West live at too rapid a pace. In the ceaseless toil after money we become callous to the finer sentiments of life." Marion looked up in astonishment. She had thought her husband irredeemably absorbed in business. "We devote too little time," he

continued, "to the development of the æsthetic side of our natures. I think we should have more people of wealth whose time is spent in fostering the arts; but as for men of absolute leisure, I think we are better off without them."

"There I can't agree with you," answered Duncan, "if among men of leisure you include those whose lives are given to sport. Look at the sportsmen of England. We want more of that sort in this country. A hard riding set of men who stick at nothing. Such a life as they lead makes men of them."

Marion was too fond of literature and the arts to agree with Duncan. She had known some of these hunting men and she had a small opinion of their talents.

"In a degree I approve of your sentiments," said her husband. "If you will eliminate the taste for drink, cards, and vice from your sportsmen. Give him some brains and make him a useful member of society, who devotes much of his time to the improvement of his tenantry, and I grant you that his counterpart would be a desirable acquisition to American life."

"So you don't believe in the reckless sportsman of the old school."

"No, I confess I don't."

"Why, may I ask?"

"I think I can best answer that question by telling you an anecdote. I was once in North Carolina looking after some property. The place where I was staying was one of the little villages in the mountains where the advent of a stranger is a matter of momentous importance. I happened to be in the village store one day when one of those tweed-and-knickerbocker Englishmen, who occasionally go there for shooting, walked in to purchase some powder. After he had received his package and was about to leave, the lean-faced cracker store-keeper detained him in conversation somewhat after this fashion:

"'Be you from Noo York, stranger?'

"The Englishman shook his head.

"'Philadelphy?'

"'No,' was the reply.

"'Chicago?'

"Another negative answer.

"'Waal, where be you from?'

"'London.'

"'Whew! and the cracker gave a long whistle. 'What brought you all the way from London to Loneville?'

"'I came to amuse myself.'

"'Ter amuse yerself, heh! Well, that is mighty curious. What d' you do when you're to home?'

"'Nothing.'

"'How d' you live, anyway?

"'My father supports me.'

"'Don't do nothing when you're to home, and yer father keeps ye?'

"'Yes.'

"'Waal, I'd like to ask ye jest one more question. What 'ud you do 'f your father should bust?'

"That is my theory. I don't think any man should be brought up in such a way that he would have nothing to fall back on if his wealth should fail him. Give every young man an employment of some sort, no matter how rich he may be, and he will know what to do when his father 'busts'."

Marion, somehow, found herself agreeing with her husband's views. His ideas had always seemed so restricted before. She wondered why he was becoming so sensib

François cleared the table and changed the glasses; the coffee was brought and Duncan and Roswell lighted their cigars. Marion usually remained during the smoking when the party was small, so the talk went on uninterruptedly, Roswell continuing his easy flow of anecdote and argument, and turning the conversation as one subject after another was suggested to his mind. Marion caught herself occasionally looking at her husband with a feeling of admiration, and wondered why she had never before discovered his charm of manner. She felt that he occasionally turned his keen eyes toward her as though he understood her thoughts, and she was afraid that he might be able to see her heart.

"I read a case in the paper this morning which impressed me sadly," said Roswell, putting down his empty coffee cup. "I knew the people and it seemed but the outcome of my fears."

"What was it?" asked Marion.

"The wife of a man I have known in business has left him. The husband went to Decatur on Thursday, and when he returned he found that she had fled the night before with her music teacher."

"It was probably a good riddance, wasn't it," said Duncan.

Marion thought these words unnecessarily harsh and she found herself looking appealingly at Roswell for a charitable reply.

"I can't say that," replied Roswell. "The trouble was that they had nothing in common. He was a man who began life as a page on the Board of Trade. By careful attention to business he worked his way up until he is now a very successful broker. He has, however, absolutely no social position, and no prospect of attaining one. When, two years ago, he went East, and married a girl who belonged to a good Syracuse family and brought her West, it must have been a bitter disappointment to the young wife to find herself denied the recognition which she was accustomed to receive at home. She was alone in a strange city. Her husband was away most of the time, and he was so completely wrapped up in business that his wife was left to her own resources. Can you condemn her entirely for doing as she did? It is all very well to behave if we have never been tempted, when, perhaps, under the same

circumstances, we might act no better ourselves. For my part I think the husband is probably as much at fault as the wife."

Marion felt her heart leap with gratitude when she heard these words. Her husband's voice had softened as he spoke them, and his eyes wore a sad, thoughtful expression.

"I don't think you are right," said Duncan, draining a glass of claret. "No one but a fool will permit a woman to go astray under his eyes, and a fool deserves to lose his wife."

As he spoke these words he looked toward Marion with an insinuating expression which told her that his remark was directed at Roswell, and that he expected her to appreciate the humor of it. Marion felt a sense of thankfulness rise in her heart. Coarseness never could appeal to her sensitive nature and she shuddered when she thought that this was the man for whom she had been willing to risk her honor. She was beginning to find him out. Thank heaven, the knowledge came before it was too late.

Roswell was silent for a moment. Then he said, thoughtfully: "Any one of us may be

cast to play the rôle of fool. Unfortunately we never recognize just when we begin to play the part. I used to think as you do, Grahame. It is only lately I have begun to feel that it takes two to create a difference. Perhaps I am wrong, but I believe that, had my friend recognized sooner that his wife was made unhappy by his own neglect and the surroundings in which he placed her, the danger might have been averted."

For a while no one spoke. Marion gazed thoughtfully at the table; Duncan twirled a glass carelessly between his fingers and a smile played on his lips, while Roswell silently puffed his cigar and watched the blue wreaths of smoke curl gently upward.

"Shall we go into the next room, my dear?" said Roswell after a moment, dropping his half-finished cigar. "I have just time to catch my train."

"You are not going, are you?" said Marion, looking up, startled. "Please put off your trip," she added with a slight tone of appeal in her voice.

"I must go," he answered, rising from his chair.

The three people walked toward the hall. As they reached the door, Roswell stopped and motioned Duncan to lead the way. The younger man passed out, leaving Marion and her husband together. Roswell took both his wife's hands and drew her toward him.

"I must leave Grahame with you, my dear. Don't mind my running away. It is business and can't be helped."

"Don't go, Roswell," pleaded Marion, and she turned her head away so that he could not look into her face.

"I must, my darling. I must," he answered, and she felt his arms about her. She hid her face on his breast, and, ashamed of her unworthiness, she felt afraid to be left alone. "Good-by, dear," he said, and kissed her tenderly on her forehead. They walked silently through the hallway to the little French room, by the door. They found Duncan there, wandering carelessly about examining the ornaments. Stepping up to him, Roswell put out his hand and said simply: "I must leave you, Grahame. I have just time to catch my train. Sit here and finish your cigar. My wife will do her best to amuse you."

Duncan muttered a word of parting and Roswell hurried into the hallway. Marion took a seat in the farther end of the room and gazed thoughtfully toward the door where her husband had left. She could hear him putting on his coat and then the door closed behind him. The carriage rolled off, and as the last echo of the wheels died away she realized that she was alone with the man who had played such a strange part in her life. She felt brave now. The danger was past and her only thought was to prove worthy of the confidence her husband had placed in her. She looked at Duncan, wondering what his first move would be. He took a few steps on the floor. His eyes seemed to sparkle with merriment. "Well, I must say," he said, stopping in his desultory wandering and plunging his hands into his pockets, "that husband of yours is the most convenient person that I ever came across." Marion cast an angry glance toward him. All the resentment in her nature was aroused by these coarse words. Her dream of months had vanished, and in its place was a repulsive reality.

Duncan came toward her with a confident step and tried to take her hand. Marion jumped to her feet and pushed him back. "Don't touch me," she cried.

Duncan laughed. This new-found anger amused him and he did not believe she was in earnest. "Marion, dearest, we are alone," he said ardently. "We can enjoy our love and no one will interrupt."

He made another movement toward her. She drew back and looked defiantly at him.

"I hate you," she said. "Can't you see that I hate you."

"Hate is the first step to love," answered Duncan, still amused by her anger. "Let it fade away for I want to see love smile from those bewitching eyes."

Then he hesitated. He saw anger flashing from her dark eyes now, but he could not believe that he had lost the power he had so lately exerted over her, and he fancied that this resentment must be due to some whim. "Do you forget the past, dearest? he said coaxingly, after a moment. "Do you forget our love of yesterday?"

"The unreasoning fancy of a moment is not love," answered Marion coldly.

Duncan saw now that the heart which he had felt so confident of his power to master had slipped from his grasp. Still the thought that so emotional a nature might yet be conquered by appeal prompted him to say, "What is the meaning of this change? Yesterday you loved me."

"That was yesterday. Much may happen in a day, Mr. Grahame."

"Yes," smiled Duncan sarcastically, drawing lines on the floor with the toe of his boot. "In a day one may learn the fickle nature of the woman one is foolish enough to love."

"Yes, and the character of the feeling one was foolish enough to fancy might be love." added Marion.

"Will you not listen to me?" he answered. "Some one has been poisoning your mind against me."

Marion felt that this distasteful interview must end. She had been the prey of too many emotions that day to bear up much longer. She felt a desire to fly away somewhere and escape from this man. Sommoning her courage she looked full into Duncan's face and said, in a firm voice: "Mr. Grahame,

I will not be insulted. I think there is nothing more to be said."

The color rose to Duncan's cheeks. His pride was touched, yet deep in his heart he could not help feeling ashamed of his own conduct. Revenge for another woman's actions had prompted him to act the part he had played, and there was still manhood enough in his callous heart to make him recognize that he deserved the treatment he was receiving. But pride prompted him to retreat boldly. "As you will, Mrs. Sanderson," he answered, coolly returning Marion's glance. "I came at your bidding and I leave at your command. I had been led to believe, by your actions in the past, that I should receive a more responsive welcome, but I acknowledge my mistake."

"We understand each other perfectly," said Marion. "Six months ago, Mr. Grahame, you challenged me to a game of skill. I think you know the game well enough to recognize that you have lost."

Duncan nodded assent and walked slowly toward the door. On the threshold he turned and looked at Marion. A feeling of admira-

tion for the woman he had so misjudged prompted him to speak "Let me compliment your skill," he said. "I played that game with the assurance of an old hand and I lost. You were a novice, but you won."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE LIBRARY.

Roswell Sanderson was in the library writing. A week had passed since his departure for St. Louis, and a considerable accumulation of mail was absorbing his attention. He had arrived home that morning on an early train, and not caring to awake his wife had gone into the library to look over his letters. It was Sunday, and the measured patter of the raindrops on the window-panes seemed to forebode a cheerless day, while the dismal light, almost obscured by the lowering clouds and heavy window draperies, produced an air of gloom intensified, perhaps, by the unusual chill of the summer atmosphere. Roswell was alone, and as he wrote the scratching of his pen on the paper blended monotonously with the pattering raindrops. Perhaps half an hour passed. Marion entered the room and stood for a moment near the door. There was a fresher color in her cheeks,

even in that dim light, and her eyes seemed to have lost their look of restless longing. As she watched her husband writing, a smile of mingled tenderness and sadness came to her lips. Then she walked softly on tip-toe to where he sat, and placed her hand gently on his shoulder.

Roswell looked up startled. "Why, Marion," he said, "I didn't expect to see you so early." Then, leaving his seat, he took both his wife's hands in his and kissed her.

"I am thankful you have come back," said Marion. "I have wanted you so much."

She placed her arms around his neck, and rested her head on his shoulder. There had been a tenderness in her voice which made Roswell's heart beat faster than it had ever done before. "Yes, dear," he said, "I have come back, and I think I have a surprise for you, too."

"A surprise," said Marion, looking up.

"Yes. Sit down and I will tell you all about it."

Roswell resumed his seat, and Marion took a low stool at his side and waited for him to speak.

"It is not very much," he said, taking a letter from the table, "but I have here a refusal of the McIlvaine cottage at Bar Harbor for the season. Would you like to go there?"

An expression of astonishment come to Marion's face. "Is this true?" she asked.

"I am only waiting for you to say yes before sending my reply."

"Why did you do this, Roswell?" she said, with a tone of tenderness in her voice.

"Because I felt it would be better for both of us to go away this summer. I am working too hard, I think, and must have a rest. But that is only a selfish reason; I feel it would do you good to be among new people and new scenes."

Marion looked into his eyes a moment and a dark expression of disgust came across her face. "Why don't you speak the truth, Roswell?" she said. "Why don't you say that you are going away because your wife is a selfish woman who is discontented in her home; why don't you say that she is a wicked creature who cares for nothing but her own amusement, and that you are taking her where she can find new excitements? Why don't you

say this?" she repeated, and then she buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

Roswell leaned forward and stroked her head softly. "I love my wife," he said, "and I will not permit you to say such things about her."

"You don't know how wicked she is; you don't know how black her heart has been," Marion replied, between the sobs. "O, Roswell, I shall never be happy till I tell you all about it and ask you to forgive me. I have thought it over every moment since you left, and I have tried to feel right in my heart, but I can't until you know how wicked I have been. You are too good and generous for a selfish creature like me; but you must know that I have been untrue to you in my heart. Roswell, I did not love you when I married you; I never loved you until a week ago. I did not know your goodness before, and I was thoughtless. O, forgive me, Roswell; forgive me."

Roswell raised her head until he could look into her face. "I forgave you long ago, dearest," he said, "and now I want to see you dry those sweet eyes. I guessed your trouble last

winter. At first it was hard for me to bear, and I had black thoughts in my heart, too; but when I remembered how I had been bound up in my musty cash books and ledgers, and how I had failed to enter into your life, I felt I had no right to reproach you. I saw that you were drifting from me, and I knew the fault was mine. Then I prayed that I might save you and win you back again."

"And you forgive me," said Marion, sobbing still.

Roswell kissed her. "It is I who must be forgiven," he said. "I ought to have seen before that a woman like you could not love a crusty old banker, who came home every night covered with the dust of the office. I am a rough fellow who needs a lot of polishing up, but I want you to try and see what you can make of me, and I want your love."

"My darling," said Marion. "I love you as I never knew I could love. I thought the wild fancy of the moment was love, but I have learned my mistake. If you will take me into your heart again I will try so hard to make you a good wife."

A faint sunbeam came through the eastern window and glanced feebly along the floor; then it grew stronger and stronger, until the gloomy library was brightened by a flood of rich, warm sunlight. The storm had ceased. The clouds had rolled away.

"It takes some such trial as ours," Roswell said, "to call forth love. We know now how necessary we are to each other, don't we, dear?"

The look of sweet tenderness in Marion's eyes gave him his answer.

"Let us think no more of those days, my darling," said Roswell, throwing his arms about his wife and drawing her closer to his side. "We will forget the past and live in the future. What answer shall I send about the cottage?" As he said this he reached toward the table to get the letter. Marion's eyes followed his hand, and they fell upon a name signed to a note lying there.

"That man!" she cried, turning her head away and hiding her face on Roswell's shoulder.

"That man will worry you no more," he

said, taking up the note. "Read what he says."

Marion took the paper and read:

"DEAR MR. SANDERSON:

"I wish to say that I have obtained the loan I required from the 'Grocers' National,' so I shall not need to keep my appointment with you. I leave for New York to-day, and shall be unable to see you on your return from St. Louis. Thanking you for your kindness to me while in Chicago, believe me, with kindest regards,

"Yours faithfully,

"June 29. DUNCAN GRAHAME."

Marion shuddered as she put down the note. It told its story and she felt that there was nothing more to be said.

"This is the letter I want you to answer," said Roswell, taking up the one from Bar Harbor.

Marion looked thoughtfully at the floor a moment, then, glancing up, she said: "If you don't mind, dear, I should like to go to some quieter place. I have had excitements before, but I have never had my husband, and I want him all to myself."

"My darling," said Roswell.

Florence entered the room and stood for a moment near the door. At first she was too surprised to speak, then, appreciating the propriety of making her presence known, she retreated a few steps and said: "May I come in?"

"Of course you may, you dear girl," said Marion, looking up. "You may come in and find the happiest woman in the world. Don't look surprised. Roswell and I are young lovers, and we are laying plans for our honeymoon. I don't deserve my happiness, but I have just discovered that I have the best husband in the world."

Florence ran to Marion's side and kissed her. "Let me share your joy," she said.

That evening Harold Wainwright dined at the Sandersons, and four happy people seated themselves at the little, round table. The candles shed the same cheerful light upon the white linen and the glistening plate, and François moved from place to place with his wonted precision; but the fire of love had kindled on the hearth, and in that home a new life had begun.

THE END.

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